

We will deal with Genital Herpes today in our section on Sexuality.

Genital herpes is a sexually transmitted disease caused by the herpes simplex virus. It can cause sores on the genital or rectal area, buttocks, and thighs. You can get it from having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has it. The virus can be spread even when the sores are not present. Mothers can infect their babies during childbirth.

The symptoms are commonly called flare-ups. The sores usually appear near the area where the virus entered the body. Sores are blisters that break open and become painful, then heal. Sometimes people don't know they have herpes because they have no or very mild symptoms. The virus can be more serious in newborns or in people with weakened immune systems.

Repetition of outbreaks is common, especially during the first year. Over time symptoms appear less frequently and are milder. The virus stays in your body forever.

There are tests that can diagnose genital herpes. There is no cure. However, medicines can help decrease symptoms, reduce flare-ups, and lower the risk of spreading it to others. The correct use of latex condoms can reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of contracting or spreading herpes. The most reliable way to avoid infection is not to have anal, vaginal, or oral sex.

It is a sexually transmitted infection. Caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV).

It focuses on HSV type 2 infection.

Causes

Genital herpes affects the skin or mucous membranes of the genitals. The virus is passed from one person to another during sexual contact.

There are 2 types of VHS:

HSV-1 often affects the mouth and lips, causing cold sores or fever blisters. However, it can be transmitted from the mouth to the genitals during oral sex.

HSV type 2 (HSV-2) almost always causes genital herpes. It can be transmitted through contact

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with the skin or through oral or genital fluids (secretions).

You can get herpes if your skin, vagina, penis, or mouth come in contact with someone who already has herpes.

You are more likely to get herpes if you touch the skin of someone who has blisters, a rash, or sores associated with herpes. However, the virus can spread even when there are no ulcers or other symptoms present. In some cases, you may not know that you are infected.

Genital HSV-2 infections are more common in women than in men.

Self-care - genital herpes

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It is normal to be concerned after discovering that you have genital herpes. But know that you are not alone. Millions of people are carriers of the virus. Although there is no cure, genital herpes can be treated. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for treatment and monitoring.

Future shoots

One type of the herpes virus remains in the body by hiding within nerve cells. It can remain "asleep" (latent) for a long time. The virus can "wake up" (reactivate) at any time. This can be triggered by:

Fatigue

Genital irritation

Menstruation

Physical or emotional stress

Injury

The pattern of outbreaks varies widely among people with herpes. Some people carry the virus despite never having symptoms. Others may have only one outbreak, or outbreaks may be infrequent. Some people have regular flare-ups that happen every 1 to 4 weeks.

Personal care

To relieve symptoms:

Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin) to relieve pain.

Apply cold compresses to the sores several times a day to relieve pain and itching.

Women with sores on the lips of the vagina (labia) may try urinating in a tub of water to avoid pain.

Doing the following can help the sores heal:

Gently wash the sores with soap and water. Then pat dry.

DO NOT put bandages on the sores. Air accelerates healing.

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DO NOT scratch the sores. They can become infected and this delays healing.
DO NOT use ointment or lotion on sores unless your provider prescribes it.

Wear loose cotton underwear. DO NOT wear nylon or other synthetic fiber stockings or underwear. Additionally, DO NOT wear tight pants.

Medicine

Genital herpes cannot be cured. Antiviral medications (acyclovir and other related medications) can relieve pain and discomfort and help the outbreak go away more quickly. They can also reduce the number of breakouts. Follow the provider's instructions on how to take these medications if they have been prescribed for you. There are two ways to take them:

One way is to take them for about 7 to 10 days when symptoms occur. This usually shortens the time it takes for symptoms to go away.

The other way is to take them daily to prevent breakouts.

In general, the side effects of this medicine are very few or nonexistent. If presented, they may include:

Fatigue
Headache
Nausea and vomiting
Rash
Convulsions
Tremor

Reduce breakouts

Consider taking antiviral medications every day to prevent flare-ups.

Taking steps to stay healthy can also minimize the risk of future flare-ups. Things you can do include:

Get enough sleep. This helps you keep your immune system strong.
Eating healthy food. Good nutrition also helps your immune system stay strong.
Keep stress under control. Constant stress can weaken your immune system.
Protect yourself from the sun, wind, extreme cold and heat. Wear sunscreen, especially on the lips. On windy, cold, or hot days, stay indoors or take steps to protect yourself from the weather.

Prevent the spread of herpes

Even when you do not have sores, you can pass (pass) the virus to someone during sexual intercourse or other close contact. To protect others:

Tell all of your sexual partners that you have herpes before you have sex. Let them decide what to do.

Use latex or polyurethane condoms and avoid sexual contact during flare-ups.

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DO NOT have vaginal, anal, or oral sex when you have sores on or near your genitals, anus, or mouth.

DO NOT kiss or perform oral sex when you have a sore on your lips or inside your mouth.

DO NOT share your towels, toothbrushes, or lipstick. Make sure that the dishes and utensils you use are thoroughly washed with detergent before others use them.

Wash your hands well with soap and water after touching a sore.

Consider using antiviral medications daily to limit viral transmission and reduce the risk of passing the virus to your partner.

It may also be a good idea to consider testing your partner, even if he or she has never had an outbreak. If you both have the herpes virus, there is no risk of transmission.

When to contact a medical professional

Call your healthcare provider if you have any of the following problems:

Symptoms of an outbreak that get worse despite medication and self-care

Symptoms including severe pain and sores that don't heal

Frequent outbreaks

Outbreaks during pregnancy

Alternative names: Herpes - genital - personal care; Herpes simplex - genital - personal care; Herpesvirus 2 - personal care; HSV-2 - personal care. Courtesy:

<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/>

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