

Herpes; What it is and how to Deal with it:

<http://familydoctor.org/healthfacts/091/>

What is herpes?

Herpes is the name of a group of viruses that cause painful blisters and sores. One kind of herpes, herpes simplex causes both cold sores around the mouth and genital herpes (herpes around the sexual organs). Herpes zoster, another kind of herpes, causes chickenpox and shingles.

How is genital herpes spread?

Genital herpes is spread easily. The virus from contact with an infected person can enter your body through a break in your skin or through the skin of your mouth, penis or vagina, urinary tract opening, cervix or anus. Herpes is most easily spread when blisters or sores can be seen on the infected person. But it can be spread at any time, even when there aren't any symptoms.

Genital herpes is usually spread from one person to another by having sex, including oral sex. Herpes can also be spread from one place on your body to another, such as from your genitals to your fingers, then to your eyes or to other parts of your body. Herpes can also be spread from a mother to her baby when she gives birth.

What should I do if I think I have herpes?

See your doctor as soon as you think you may have herpes. Herpes is easier to diagnose when there are sores. You can start treatment sooner and perhaps have less pain with the infection.

What happens once someone is infected?

Once you have the virus, you'll go through different stages of infection. Each stage is explained in the following sections.

Primary stage

This stage usually starts 2 to 8 days after you're infected, but it can take much longer to begin. Usually, the infection causes groups of small, painful blisters. The fluid in the blisters may be clear or cloudy. The area under the blisters will be red. The blisters break open so easily that they quickly become open sores. You may not even notice the blisters.

Besides having tender blisters or sores in your genital area, it may hurt to urinate. You may run a fever and have other flu-like symptoms.

While most people have a painful primary stage of infection, some don't have any symptoms at all, and may not even know they're infected.

Latent stage

During this stage, there are no blisters, sores or other symptoms. At this time, the virus is traveling from your skin into the nerves near your spine.

Shedding stage

The virus starts multiplying in the nerves. It can then get into body fluids, such as saliva, semen or vaginal fluids. This is called shedding. There are no symptoms during this stage, but the virus can be spread during this time.

Recurrences

Many people have blisters and sores that come back after the first herpes attack goes away. This is called a recurrence. Usually, the symptoms aren't as bad as they were during the first attack.

Stress, being sick or being tired may start a recurrence. Being in the sun or having your menstrual period may also cause a recurrence. You may know when a recurrence is about to happen because you may feel itching, tingling or pain in the places where you were first infected.

Is there a cure for herpes?

No. But medicines can help. The medicine acyclovir (brand name: Zovirax) can speed up healing and can lessen the pain of herpes for many people.

Acyclovir pills can treat primary or recurrent herpes and can stop or lessen the number of recurrences. Acyclovir also comes in a cream to put on sores during the primary stage or during recurrences.

Famciclovir (brand name: Famvir) and valacyclovir (brand name: Valtrex) are other medicines used to treat recurrent genital herpes and for prevention of recurrences.

Tips to soothe the pain

- Take aspirin, acetaminophen (brand name: Tylenol) or ibuprofen (brand names: Advil, Motrin, Nuprin).
- Place lukewarm or cool cloths on the sore place.
- Take lukewarm baths. (A woman may urinate in the tub at the end of the bath if she is having pain urinating--this helps dilute the urine so it doesn't burn the sores so badly.)
- Keep the area dry and clean.
- Wear cotton underwear.
- Wear loose-fitting clothes.

What about how I feel about having herpes?

It's common to feel guilty or ashamed when you hear you have herpes. You may feel that your sex life is ruined or that someone you thought you could trust has hurt you. You may feel sad or upset.

Keep in mind that you are one of millions of people with herpes. Herpes may get less severe as time goes by, and you can help protect your sex partner by not having sex during outbreaks and by using condoms at other times. Talk to your family doctor about how you're feeling.

Is there a safe time to have sex and not spread herpes?

No time is completely safe because it's hard to know for sure when you can spread herpes. You must tell your sex partner that you have herpes.

You should avoid having sex if you have any sores. Herpes can spread from one person to another very easily when sores are present. Another reason to avoid sex when sores are present is that sores make it easier to catch the AIDS virus.

You should use condoms every time you have sex. Condoms can only help reduce the risk of spreading herpes if they cover all the infected skin.

Can I give herpes to my baby if I'm pregnant?

Tell your doctor if you have genital herpes or if you have ever had sex with someone who did. The main concern is that the baby may be born while you have sores or are shedding the herpes virus, which could spread the infection to the baby. If a baby catches herpes, it could be serious.

The baby is usually safe in the uterus. When the baby passes through the birth canal, it may catch herpes. Your doctor may do a cesarean section ("C section") if you have an outbreak at the time you go into labor, so the baby won't have to go through your birth canal.

Alternative Therapies for HSV Include;

- Talk to your doctor if you think you may have herpes.
- Remember that you're not alone. Millions of people have herpes.
- Keep yourself healthy and limit your stress.
- Don't touch your sores.
- Tell your sex partner and use condoms

QUICK REVIEW

- Recurrent canker sores can be caused by trauma, food sensitivities (especially milk and gluten sensitivities), stress, and/or nutrient deficiency.
- Eliminating food allergens, sources of gluten, and nutritional deficiencies results in complete cure in most cases.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

The data presented suggest that numerous factors can lead to recurrent canker sores. Considerable evidence suggests that the underlying problem may be a gluten sensitivity and/or food allergy. In addition, nutrient deficiencies need to be corrected. DGL can be used to help heal the ulcers.

Diet

The diet should be free of known allergens and all gluten sources (i.e., grains).

Nutritional Supplements

- Vitamin C: 1,000 mg per day
- High-potency multiple-vitamin-and mineral supplement.
- DGL: One to two 380-mg chewable tablets twenty minutes before meals.