

Herpes

What is Herpes?

Genital herpes is a Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) caused by the herpes simplex viruses type 1 (HSV-1) or type 2 (HSV-2). Most genital Herpes is caused by HSV-2.

How do you get Herpes?

HSV-1 and HSV-2 can be found in and released from the sores that the viruses cause, but they also are released between outbreaks from skin that does not appear to have a sore. Generally, a person can only get HSV-2 infection during sexual contact with someone who has a genital HSV-2 infection.

What are the symptoms of Herpes?

Most people infected with HSV-2 are not aware of their infection. However, if signs and symptoms occur during the first outbreak, they can be quite pronounced. The first outbreak usually occurs within two weeks after the virus is transmitted, and the sores typically heal within two to four weeks. Other signs and symptoms during the primary episode may include a second outbreak of sores, and flu-like symptoms, including fever and swollen glands.

How can Herpes be prevented?

Abstinence is the only 100% full-proof method of not contracting Herpes or be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship. However, latex male condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of transmission of Herpes.

What happens if I don't get treated?

Genital Herpes can cause recurrent painful genital sores in many adults, and Herpes infection can be severe in people with suppressed immune systems. Regardless of severity of symptoms, genital Herpes frequently causes psychological distress in people who know they are infected.

In addition, genital HSV can lead to potentially fatal infections in babies. It is important that women avoid contracting Herpes during pregnancy because a newly acquired infection during late pregnancy poses a greater risk of transmission to the baby. If a woman has active genital Herpes at delivery, a caesarean delivery is usually performed. Fortunately, infection of a baby from a woman with Herpes infection is rare.

Herpes can make people more susceptible to HIV infection, and it can make HIV-infected individuals more infectious.

Where can I get more information?

Oklahoma State Department of Health
HIV/STD Service
1000 N.E. Tenth, Room 614
Oklahoma City, OK 73117-1299
Phone: (405)-271-4636
Fax: (405)-271-5149
www.health.ok.gov

Division of STD Prevention (DSTDP)
Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention
www.cdc.gov/std

CDC-INFO Contact Center
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
Email: cdcinfo@cdc.gov

Your sexual partner(s) should be tested for Herpes even if they have no symptoms. If you have been diagnosed with Herpes, you should have a blood test in three months to detect blood-borne infections you might have contracted at the time you had Herpes.

When will the symptoms appear?

Symptoms usually appear within 1 to 30 days or longer after contact.

How is Herpes diagnosed?

Health care providers can diagnose genital Herpes by visual inspection if the outbreak is typical, and by taking a sample from the sore(s) and testing it in a laboratory. HSV infections can be diagnosed between outbreaks by the use of a blood test. Blood tests, which detect antibodies to HSV-1 or HSV-2 infection, can be helpful, although the results are not always clear-cut.

How is Herpes treated?

There is no treatment that can cure Herpes, but antiviral medications can shorten and prevent outbreaks. In addition, daily suppressive therapy for symptomatic herpes can reduce transmission to partners.

How common is Herpes?

Herpes is a very common infectious disease. Nationwide, at least 45 million people ages 12 and older, or one out of five adolescents and adults, have genital HSV infection.



Oklahoma State
Department of Health
Creating a State of Health

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Facts & Information