



HERPES SIMPLEX

What is herpes simplex?

- Herpes simplex is a disease of the skin and mucous membranes caused by viruses called herpes simplex 1 or herpes simplex 2. It occurs where the virus enters the body, cold sores on the mouth or face or on the genitals.

What are symptoms that could occur?

- Some people are not aware of being infected, particularly women with genital infections
- Initial symptoms of an infection are tingling, burning or itching
- This is followed by blisters that break open and crust over and heal
- During a first episode, fever, swollen glands, burning with urination or vaginal discharge (with genital infections) may occur

How is it spread?

- By direct skin to skin contact with blisters
- Contagious before and through the entire outbreak of blisters
- It may be spread to other parts of the body or to other people by kissing, sexual activity or careless hygiene
- Symptoms usually appear 2-12 days after exposure
- Blisters typically heal in 2-4 weeks
- It is not spread by toilet seats, telephones, whirlpools, etc.
- Sores may reappear with increased levels of stress, illness, injuries, eating poorly and worry

How is it diagnosed and treated?

- Primary care provider evaluation and laboratory testing, if necessary
- There is no cure for herpes, but there are anti-viral medications that will decrease severity and frequency of recurrences

How can herpes simplex be prevented?

- Abstain from sexual activity or be in a long-term monogamous relationship
- Use latex condom for all other sexual activity, understanding a latex condom is no guarantee of protection from herpes or any other sexually transmitted disease
- Persons with herpes should abstain from sexual activity with uninfected partners when lesions or other symptoms of herpes are present
- It is important to know that even if you do not have any symptoms you can still infect your sex partner
- Avoid contact/kissing anyone with blisters

Are there complications?

- There may be recurrent painful sores
- Disease can be severe in those with suppressed immune systems
- Eye infections can cause blindness
- Can cause psychological distress in people who know they are infected
- Genital infections can cause potentially fatal infections in babies if the mother has sores at the time of delivery. If a woman has active genital herpes at delivery, a cesarean delivery is usually performed

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Should the sick child be isolated?

- There is no need to isolate children or adults with herpes simplex infections

When can the child return to day care or school?

- There is no need to exclude the child from school or day care

Should schools do special cleaning?

- Special cleaning is not necessary. Routine cleaning with EPA approved products is recommended.

If I have any other questions, whom can I contact?

- Call the Genesee County Health Department at 257-3612

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider.

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