# Description

Herpes is a common infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). Herpes usually causes painful blisters that break open and form sores. The most common sites of outbreaks are the genitals, mouth and rectal area. There are approximately 40 million Americans currently infected with genital herpes, though most are asymptomatic (show no symptoms). An estimated 200,000 new cases of genital herpes are diagnosed each year in the U.S.

## For more information:

Student Health & Wellness Center......707-654-1170

Visit Our Website at http://www.csum.edu/web/campus-life/student-center/student-health-center

24-hr Nurse Advice Line (Med Call)......800-877-0027

American Social Health Association (ASHA)

National STD Hotline......800-227-8922

\*\*Special Thanks to San Diego State University\*\*

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Herpes Simplex (Genital and Oral)



California Maritime Academy

A campus of the California State University



# Herpes Simplex (Genital and Oral)

# What are the different types of Herpes Simplex?

The two most common types of herpes virus are herpes simplex virus type I (HSV-1) and herpes simplex virus type II (HSV-2). HSV-1 most frequently causes infections of the mouth and less commonly causes infections of the genital or rectal areas. HSV-2 most frequently causes infections of the genitals and rectal area and less commonly causes infections of the mouth. Both types of viruses are transmitted by direct contact with infected skin or mucous membranes. HSV-1 infections tend to cause less frequent and severe outbreak recurrences than HSV-2 infections.

#### **Transmission**

Herpes is most contagious from the time just before blisters appear (prodromal stage) until the resulting sores are healed. A person can become infected with the virus by contact with infected skin on the genitals, mouth, rectal area, or buttocks. The infection is often passed from person to person during sexual intercourse. During oral sex, genital herpes can pass to the lips and mouth and, conversely, oral herpes on the lips can pass to the genitals.

Occasionally, herpes virus may be transmitted by infected individuals even though blisters and sores are not present and the skin appears normal (asymptomatic viral shedding). It is not known how often asymptomatic shedding occurs.

Once a person is infected, the virus stays in the body for life. There is no cure for herpes, although symptoms can be treated. Usually the virus is in an inactive state and stays within nerve cells near the spine without causing symptoms. However, at any time, the virus may become active and cause sores again. These outbreaks may occur as often as every few weeks or much less frequently and sometimes never. Most people infected with herpes have recurrent outbreaks that decrease in frequency over time as the body gradually builds immunity against the virus.

#### **Symptoms**

Symptoms usually occur about 2 to 10 days after the virus enters the body and may include:

### Oral Herpes (fever blisters, cold sores):

 Blisters that occur on the lips and at the corner of the mouth. They usually break open and form painful open sores that crust over and scab.

Note: Sores that are inside the mouth, on the mouth, or in the throat are usually canker sores, which are not caused by herpes and are not contagious. If you are unsure, consult your healthcare provider.

### **Genital Herpes:**

- Tiny clear blisters may occur on the penis, scrotum, vulva (outer vaginal area), in the vagina, on the cervix, near the rectum, or on the thighs or buttocks. Usually there is a group of several blisters, but there may be just a single blister. The blisters quickly break open and form small (1/8 inch to 1/4 inch wide) pink or red shallow sores. The sores are tender to the touch and may crust over and scab. They usually heal without scarring. Other symptoms may include:
- Vaginal discharge
- Pain during urination
- Difficulty urinating
- Itching
- Tender, enlarged lymph nodes in the groin

The symptoms of herpes are usually most severe during the first outbreak. Flu-like symptoms are common and may include mild fever, headache, muscle aches, and general discomfort. In addition, sores are also usually more severe and last longer (10-12 days) than during recurrences (4-5 days).

Note: Some people that become infected with HSV never have any symptoms or outbreaks. They are called asymptomatic carriers and usually do not even know they are infected.

#### Treatmen

Herpes cannot be "cured" and the virus remains in the body. Treatment is aimed at providing relief of symptoms and prevention of secondary infection from developing in the blisters. Your healthcare provider may prescribe acyclovir (Zovirax) or another antiviral drug to relieve the symptoms more quickly. These medicines will also shorten the amount of time that a person remains contagious. For people with very frequent recurrences, these medicines may be prescribed for use on a daily basis to decrease the frequency of recurrences.

Other recommendations during outbreaks:

- The infected area should be kept dry and clean to promote healing. Wear loose clothing, preferably cotton, to allow circulation of air. It also helps to avoid pressure on the skin, which may cause more blisters.
- Take aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen to reduce pain.
- Avoid sharing towels or clothing.
- Avoid using douches, perfumed soaps, sprays, feminine hygiene deodorants, or other chemicals in the genital area.
- Avoid a lot of sunlight and heat, which may cause more blisters.
- Avoid sexual contact with others.
- Wash hands frequently, especially after touching the infected area.
- If urination is painful, try urinating in the shower or bathtub. Water can help dilute the urine strength and discomfort it produces.

#### Prevention

Practice safe sex. Use condoms every time you have intercourse, including during foreplay. It is not possible to predict when the virus can be shed or passed to another person.

Ask your partner(s) if they have had herpes because herpes may be spread from areas not protected by condoms: for example, the groin, thigh, or scrotum.

Avoid oral-genital sex and oral-anal sex with someone who has oral herpes (fever blisters, cold sores).

