

STD Facts

Herpes (caused by herpes simplex virus types 1 and 2, HSV)

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Genital Herpes Symptoms:

- Develop 2-30 days after exposure
- Small, painful fluid-filled blisters on sex organs, mouth or anus
- Blisters progress to open sores that crust over and heal within 1 to 2 weeks
- Blisters may be “hidden” in the vagina
- First episode most severe, subsequent episodes milder
- Itching or burning on skin in area where blisters are about to appear
- Initial infection often accompanied by fever, headache and swollen lymph nodes
- Blisters go away, but infection still in the body
- Blisters can return periodically, but usually shorter duration and less severe

TRANSMISSION

Genital Herpes is Spread by:

- Vaginal sex
- Oral sex
- Anal sex
- Contact with infected person’s lesions
- Infected mother to newborn
- Viral shedding may occur in the absence of blisters, so transmission is possible when lesions are absent

COMPLICATIONS/CONSEQUENCES

Genital Herpes can:

- Make infection by other germs, like HIV, easier the blisters provide easy entry to other STD germs.
- Cause recurrent painful attacks

Genital Herpes and Pregnancy:

- Newborn may acquire infection from mother during delivery
- Infection in newborn may cause death, or severe damage to the brain, lungs and liver
- Most pregnant women with recurrent genital herpes deliver normal infants
- Risk is highest for infants born to mothers who have first (primary) episode of genital herpes during pregnancy

PREVENTION

Recommendations to Reduce the Spread of Genital Herpes:

- Genital ulcer diseases can occur in genital areas that are covered or protected by a latex condom. They can also occur in areas that are not covered or protected. Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of genital herpes only when the infected areas are covered or protected by the condom.
- Always use latex condoms during vaginal and anal sex
- Use a latex condom for oral sex on a penis
- Use a latex barrier for oral sex on a vagina or anus (dental dam or condom cut in half)
- Limit the number of sex partners
- Get an exam for genital herpes by doctor or other medical provider if herpes infection suspected
- Notify sex partners immediately if infected
- When pregnant, inform doctor if previously infected with herpes
- Never have sex with someone who has genital herpes when sores are present

TREATMENT

Treatment of Genital Herpes:

- No cure available; infection persists for life
- Recurrent episodes of blisters can be prevented by taking an antiviral medication each day
- Treatment of recurrent episodes generally does not shorten the length of illness and is not usually recommended
- Comfort measures are available for recurrent episodes

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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Bureau of Community Health
HIV/AIDS STD TB Hepatitis Program
505 East King Street, Room 103
Carson City, Nevada 89701
(775) 684-5902

CDC National STD and AIDS Hotlines
1-800-227-8922; 1-800-243-7889 TTY

CDC National Herpes Hotline
(919) 361-8488