

## Genital Herpes

Genital herpes is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the United States. More than one out of every 6 people have genital herpes. Anyone who is sexually active, no matter their gender or sexual orientation, can contract Herpes.

### Frequent Signs & Symptoms

There are often NO signs or symptoms. Symptoms may include:

- Itching or burning in the genital or anal area
- Sores/blisters (often painful) in the groin, genital, and/or anal areas.
- Swollen lymph nodes in groin area.
- Fever/flu-like symptoms (generally with first outbreak).

Oral herpes (HSV 1) can result in cold sores or fever blisters around the mouth.

### Causes

Genital herpes is caused by 2 types of viruses. Herpes simplex type 1 (HSV 1) and herpes simplex 2 (HSV 2). Genital herpes is passed from one person to another during sexual intercourse. You can become infected by having vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse with a partner who has the virus. Infection can occur even if your partner does not have symptoms. Most people with oral herpes (HSV 1) were infected during childhood from contact (non-sexual) with saliva. Through oral sex, HSV 1 can spread from the mouth to the genitals, so some cases of genital herpes are caused by HSV 1.

### Prevention

The only way to avoid contracting genital herpes is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse (abstinence). If you are sexually active, ways to reduce your risk include:

- Maintaining a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who is not infected.
- Using condoms the right way EVERY time you have sex. This includes condoms with oral intercourse.

### Diagnosis

Your health care provider can usually diagnose based on an exam of the symptoms. Testing may include taking a swab of a sore or a blood draw.

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### Treatment

There is no cure for HSV 1 or HSV 2. Symptoms can recur since once infected the virus is permanently in your body. Your health care provider may prescribe antiviral medications to:

- Help decrease the severity and duration of symptoms.
- Help prevent future outbreaks.
- Help reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to others.

### Activity

Have an open and honest discussion with any partners about your diagnosis. Condoms and medications can reduce the risk of transmission but cannot eliminate the risk. Avoid any sexual contact when symptoms are present to help reduce the risk of transmission but keep in mind transmission can occur when symptoms aren't noticeable. Avoid touching sore or fluids from the sores.

### Complications

Symptoms can be more severe in people with suppressed immune systems. If you touch the sores or fluid from the sores you could transmit the virus to other parts of your body such as your eyes. The genital sores caused by herpes can increase your risk of contracting other STDs such as HIV. If you are pregnant and have been diagnosed with genital herpes, your newborn could be exposed during delivery.

**If symptoms worsen or do not improve, return to the clinic.**

**If you have worsening of symptoms when the Health and Wellness Center is unavailable, please follow up with the local ER or Urgent Care.**

Additional Information: \_\_\_\_\_

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