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# Herpes

Talk to your partner(s) about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and your health before you have sex. You can pass on an STI without knowing you have one. During sex, you can use latex condoms to lower your chances of getting STIs.

## What is Herpes?

Herpes is an infection caused by a virus. The virus is called herpes simplex virus (HSV). There are two types of HSV. They can both cause sores around the mouth. These are called cold sores. They can also cause sores on the genitals. This is known as genital herpes.

## How do you get Herpes?

- \* You may get it by kissing someone who has a cold sore.
- \* You may get herpes in your genital area if you have oral sex with someone who has cold sores.
- \* You may also get herpes on other parts of your body by touching the sores.
- \* In most cases, people with herpes pass on the virus when they have sores on their mouth or genitals that are easy to see, but sometimes they can pass on the virus when there are no sores.
- \* A pregnant woman can also pass the virus to her baby when she is giving birth.

## How can you tell if you have Herpes?

Herpes sores may show up 2 - 20 days after contact with an infected person. You will most likely feel itching or tingling on your skin. Then, you will get blisters full of water. You will get a painful sore when the blisters break. This sore will scab and heal by itself. You may also feel like you have the flu, have pain in your muscles and joints and find it painful to urinate.

## Can Herpes keep coming back?

Yes. The first time you get herpes is usually the worst. Most people get it more than once, but it is milder after the first time. You might get herpes again for some of the following reasons:

- \* You are tired or under stress.
- \* You are ill.
- \* You are not eating well.
- \* You spent too much time in the sun.
- \* You have your period.
- \* You are pregnant.

**It is important to use condoms or a latex barrier with sexual partners to decrease the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.**

### **How do you get tested for Herpes?**

If you notice sores on your genitals, see your health practitioner. A practitioner will examine you and take a swab to see if it's Herpes. There is a new blood test that confirms Herpes, however, it is not widely available or covered by OHIP.

### **How is Herpes treated?**

Even though Herpes can't be cured there is treatment available. There are several drugs that can reduce the length of the herpes outbreak, and reduce the pain. A clinician can prescribe the medication for you. This medication should be started within 72 hours of first noticing symptoms.

Medication is also available to reduce your chance of having a reoccurrence.

### **What do you do when you have a Herpes outbreak?**

- \* See your health practitioner for herpes medication within 72 hours.
- \* Keep the area clean and dry.
- \* Wear cotton underwear.
- \* Wear loose fitting clothes.
- \* Do not sun bathe.
- \* If it hurts when you urinate, sit in a tub of warm water to urinate, or pour water over the area.
- \* Apply ice packs to the sores to reduce pain.

### **How can you prevent passing on the virus?**

- \* You should not have oral sex when you have cold sores around the mouth.
- \* You should not have vaginal or anal sex if you have an outbreak of genital herpes. Wait until the sores are gone.
- \* Use condoms even if you do not see any sores. The virus can sometimes be passed on even when there are no sores.

### **If you need further information or would like to book an appointment, call:**

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services for youth ages 13 to 29. 416-927-7171. Health Services offers same-day, scheduled and drop-in appointments. For more information visit [www.ppt.on.ca](http://www.ppt.on.ca).

Women's Programming at the Bay Centre for Birth Control for women of all ages at 416-351-3700.

Youth can also access information about sexual health by calling the Teen Sex InfoLine at 416-961-3200 or chat live using MSN messenger at [spiderbytes@hotmail.com](mailto:spiderbytes@hotmail.com) from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Wednesday and 12 noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. You can also email us a question anytime at [askus@spiderbytes.ca](mailto:askus@spiderbytes.ca) or visit [www.spiderbytes.ca](http://www.spiderbytes.ca).