

What are the symptoms of HSV 1?

First off, remember that most people will have the virus but not show symptoms.

Usually, oral herpes is less painful than genital herpes and doesn't make you feel as sick. Oral herpes causes sores on your lips or around your mouth — called cold sores or fever blisters. You can also get sores inside your mouth, but that usually only happens the first few times you have symptoms.

Cold sores last a few weeks and then go away on their own. They can pop up again in weeks, months, or years. Cold sores are annoying but usually harmless.

What are the symptoms of HSV 2?

The most common symptom of genital herpes is a group of itchy or painful blisters on the vagina, vulva, cervix, anus, penis, scrotum (balls), butt, or the inside of thighs. The blisters break and turn into sores. But most of the time there are no symptoms, so lots of people don't know they have herpes.

You might have these other symptoms too: burning when you pee if your urine touches the herpes sores, having trouble peeing because the sores and swelling are blocking your urethra, itching, or pain around your genitals.

If your genital herpes is caused by HSV-2, you might also have flu-like symptoms, such as: swollen glands in your pelvic area, throat, and under your arms, fever, chills, headache, or feeling achy and tired.

When blisters and other genital herpes symptoms show up, it's called an outbreak. The first outbreak (also called the "first episode" or "initial herpes")

usually starts about 2 to 20 days after you get infected with herpes. But sometimes it takes years for the first outbreak to happen.

The first herpes outbreak lasts about 2 to 4 weeks. Even though the blisters go away, the virus stays in your body and can cause sores again. It's really common to get repeat outbreaks, especially during the first year you have herpes. You might notice some warning signs a few hours or days before outbreaks flare up, like itching, burning, or a tingly feeling on your genitals.

Tips for Being Intimate with Genital & Oral Herpes

DON'T LET HERPES WRECK YOUR SELF-ESTEEM

Millions of people have herpes. You are not alone, dirty or bad. Understanding that you are just as sexy and vibrant as before your diagnosis ensures you will continue to have healthy sexual experiences. Herpes is basically just an inconvenience, not a deterrent.

AVOID SEX DURING HERPES OUTBREAKS

This one seems like a no-brainer. When you start to experience any early outbreak symptoms, like tingling and itching, don't have sex. When you're having a full-blown outbreak, refrain from oral or genital sex, even protected sex. If you have cold sores, don't perform oral sex on your partner. Continue to avoid having sex for about 3 to 5 days after your outbreak has healed to ensure safety.

GET CREATIVE

An outbreak may mean you have to stop having sex for a few days until the infection clears- but this doesn't mean you have to stop being intimate. It may be tempting to withdraw from your partner, however, this is a great time to explore other intimate acts such as cuddling, going on dates, sexting, and nurturing your emotional connection: sex is not the only component in a romantic or intimate relationship. Additionally, mutual masturbation and sex toys are a great way to have fun without worrying about accidentally transmitting herpes to your partner.

USE PROTECTION

Using condoms during sex, even oral sex, can reduce the chance that you will pass genital herpes to your partner. A dental dam is another good barrier method to avoid transmission during oral sex.

CONSIDER TAKING SUPPRESSIVE MEDICATION

Suppressive medication is a herpes treatment that works by preventing asymptomatic shedding. Asymptomatic shedding is when the herpes virus spreads without a visible outbreak. Plus, taking these meds greatly reduces your outbreaks.

Herpes Guide



Queer-Focused Sexual Health Center

HeyDenver.org
303-962-2880

Information Provided by:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/std/herpes/stdfact-herpes.htm>
- <https://www.ashasexualhealth.org/herpes/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcII-hclrLI>

What is herpes?

Herpes is a common virus that causes sores on the genitals and/or mouth. Herpes can be annoying and painful, but it usually doesn't lead to serious health problems.

Herpes is caused by two different but similar viruses: herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1) and herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2). Both kinds can make sores pop up on and around your lips, mouth, throat, anus, butt, inner thighs, vulva, vagina, cervix, penis, scrotum, and rarely, your eyes. Oral herpes is usually caused by HSV-1 but can sometimes be caused by HSV-2. Genital herpes is an STI and can be caused by HSV-1 or HSV-2

How common is herpes?

Very common. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 1 in 6 people in the United States between the ages of 14 and 49 years have genital herpes. The World Health Organization (WHO) says that globally, about 67% of people below the age of 50 years (which equates to 3.7 billion people) have HSV-1. This is the virus that most often causes oral herpes. Chances are you probably have it, and that's okay.

How can I reduce my risk of getting herpes?

- Using protection like condoms and dental dams when you have sex helps to lower your risk of getting Herpes. Herpes can live on areas of your body that aren't protected by condoms (like the scrotum, butt cheeks, upper thighs, and labia), so condoms won't always protect you from herpes. But they do lower your chances of getting herpes.
- Herpes can spread more easily during an outbreak so it is important to be cautious about sex during this time. But herpes can also spread when there are no sores or symptoms, so it's important to use condoms and dental dams, even if everything looks and feels A-OK.

How is herpes spread?

- Herpes is spread from skin-to-skin contact with infected areas, often during vaginal sex, oral sex, anal sex, and kissing.
- Herpes is most contagious when sores are open and wet because fluid from herpes blisters easily spreads the virus. But herpes can also "shed" and get passed to others when there are no sores and your skin looks totally normal.
- Most people get herpes from someone who doesn't have any sores. It may live in your body for years without causing any symptoms, so it's really hard to know for sure when and how you got it. That's why so many people have herpes — it's a pretty sneaky infection.
- Because the virus dies quickly outside the body, you can't get herpes from hugging, holding hands, coughing, sneezing, or sitting on toilet seats.
- In rare circumstances, herpes can be transmitted during childbirth, causing neonatal herpes.

How can a herpes outbreak be prevented?

If you have lots of herpes outbreaks, your doctor may tell you to take medicine every day- this is called suppressive therapy. It can help prevent future herpes outbreaks, and lower your chances of giving herpes to your partners. Whether or not you take medicine to treat herpes, taking care of yourself by eating healthy foods, getting enough sleep, and avoiding stress might help keep future outbreaks from popping up. No one knows for sure what triggers genital herpes outbreaks. Other infections, surgery, sex, your period, skin irritations, and stress may cause outbreaks. Sunburns, injuries to your lips, or other infections can cause oral herpes flare-ups. Genital herpes outbreaks usually happen less often and become shorter and weaker after a few years- whether or not you get treated.

I'm having symptoms, should I test?

Absolutely. If you experience anything different on your body you should have a doctor check it out. If it is herpes you can be put on medication to suppress the virus and if it's not, a provider will tell you what it is.

Should I test for herpes if I'm NOT having symptoms?

You can, it is a personal choice. Remember how common it is and most people DON'T have symptoms. Since it is so common many testing sites will not test you unless you are having symptoms. If you would like to test talk with your primary care provider or Planned Parenthood.

I am having symptoms, can I go to HeyDenver?

Sorry! HeyDenver does **NOT** offer herpes testing or treatment for any STI.

So where should I go?

Denver Public Health Sexual Health Clinic

303-602-3540

Planned Parenthood Denver

303-832-5069

Your Primary Care Provider

How is Herpes Treated?

There's no cure for herpes. However, a medical provider can prescribe medication that makes outbreaks shorter and less painful and can help prevent outbreaks in the future. Additionally, there are plenty of ways to treat the symptoms and manage the infection. Once you are seen by a provider to confirm your diagnosis, they can recommend methods to help.

