



Just the Facts

57-011-0594

...About Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) Infection

What is Herpes Simplex Virus?

Herpes Simplex Virus or HSV is one of the most common infectious agents which affects humans. Seventy to ninety percent of the adults in the United States possess antibodies to HSV in their blood, indicating a previous infection. For centuries, we have known about the illness HSV causes, but only recently have we gained a better understanding of the infection.

What are the Effects of HSV?

Herpes Simplex Virus causes fluid-filled blisters on a reddened base. When the blisters break, the fluid is very infectious but does not penetrate intact skin.

In other words, if you touched a blister and you had a cut on your skin, you would probably become infected only on your hand. But if you touched your mouth or lips, a lip sore would be likely since the virus penetrates mucous membranes. The appearance of the lesion will take from 2 days to 2 weeks following infection. Some infections, especially in children, can be without symptoms. Other people will have fever and chills and feel as though they have the flu.

Once a person is initially infected, the virus never leaves the body but rests in the nerves of the part of the body which was infected. The lesions return at another time when the person is under physical or psychological stress, or exposed to sun. This "return" is known as a recurrence.

Is There More Than One Type of HSV?

Two distinct types of HSV exist: HSV-1 and HSV-2.

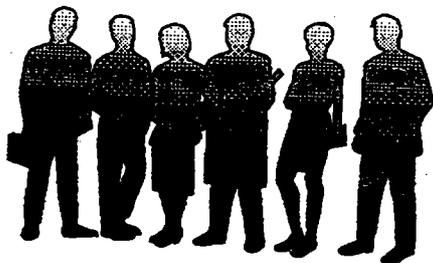
Herpes Simplex Virus-1 usually affects the body above the waist, with the mouth being the most common site of primary infection. Recurrences of HSV-1 usually appear as fever blisters or cold sores. Although rare, HSV-1 can infect the eye or the brain. The most important way of spreading HSV-1 is through contact with the saliva of infected HSV-1 carriers, even those who may be without symptoms.

Herpes Simplex Virus-2 infections primarily involve the genital and surrounding area. Transmission usually occurs by sexual contact with persons who are shedding the virus.

Occasionally HSV-1 can cause infection below the waist, and HSV-2 can infect areas above the waist. However, the precautions needed to stop the spread are identical.

Are Children at Risk?

Children are probably at risk for HSV by touching each others' mouths, by kissing, and by putting shared toys in their mouths.



- ◆ Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinics
- Child Development Centers
- DOD Schools
- ◆ Information/Guidance
- ◆ Communicable Conditions

For additional information contact your local health consultant or health care provider

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How Can You Determine if Either You or Your Child Has HSV Infection?

Where to Look—

- ♦ Face
- ♦ Lips
- ♦ Hands

What to Look for—

- ♦ Redness and tingling (may be the initial sign of infection)
- ♦ One or more raised sores or fluid-filled blisters
- ♦ Open ulcers once the blisters break
- ♦ Scab formation over the ulcer

What Can Parents and Caregivers Do?

Restrict children with fever blisters or cold sores from activities that promote the sharing of saliva, such as kissing on the mouth or mouthing of shared items (e.g., toys or pencils).