



Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) 1 & 2

What is HSV?

The Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) is a group of viruses, some of which are sexually transmitted infections (STI's). Two specific types of this virus include:

- 1) **HSV-1**, which generally causes outbreaks of sores around the mouth area. These are also known as cold sores.
- 2) **HSV-2**, which generally causes outbreaks of sores in the genital area. These are known as genital herpes.

How is HSV Transmitted?

HSV is transmitted through direct skin-to-skin contact. This means it can be transmitted during vaginal, oral and anal sex, kissing and any other behavior where infected areas meet naked skin.

This means...

- A partner with cold sores (HSV-1) can infect the **genital area** of a partner through oral sex.
- A partner with genital herpes (HSV-2) can infect a partner's **mouth** during oral sex.
- Intercourse does **not** need to occur to transfer – naked skin touching an infected area is enough!

A person is most at risk of transmitting this infection they are experiencing an outbreak.

However, 70% of herpes cases occur when the infected partner has no visual symptoms

It is also possible for a pregnant individual infected with HSV to transmit the virus to their baby during vaginal delivery.

What Are the Symptoms of HSV?

First signs include lesion(s)/ sore(s) that can tingle, itch or are painful in or around the mouth, and any area of the skin in the boxer short area (meaning vagina, cervix, vulva, penis, scrotum, upper thigh, anus,

and buttocks).

- A person *may* experience a fever, muscle pain and/or swollen lymph nodes during the first outbreak.
 - The first outbreak will resolve in between 17 and 20 days.
 - The sore(s)/lesion(s) will dry up and scab over and generally do not leave scars.
- After the first outbreak resolves, a person may or may not experience additional outbreak(s) throughout their life.
- Generally, there are fewer lesion(s)/sore(s) during subsequent outbreaks. Fever and muscle pain usually decrease or disappear as well during these. These outbreaks are usually shorter than the first outbreak – about 16 days.

Generally, **HSV-2** causes more intense and more frequent outbreaks on the genital area than **HSV-1**.

*****Typical symptoms of herpes are those mentioned above. Please note that some have different symptoms and they mistake them for other conditions such as jock itch, razor burn, and persistent yeast infections. It is possible for these patients to be misdiagnosed by a doctor.**

How Long Will It Take for Symptoms of HSV to Appear?

It normally takes an average of 2-20 days after exposure for symptoms to appear. However, in some cases it can take as long one year or more after exposure for a person to experience any symptoms.

- **Individuals have no way of knowing that they have been infected until they experience an outbreak.**

When Should I be Tested for HSV?

The only way for a person to be tested for HSV is if they are experiencing sore(s)/ lesion(s) in the boxer short or oral area. A doctor may be able to visually diagnose an infected person who is experiencing these symptoms. However, in most cases a doctor will take a swab of the sore(s)/lesion(s) for testing to confirm the presence of **HSV-1** or **HSV-2**, or a blood test may be taken under specific circumstances.

****Remember that even if you have regular STI screening, you are NOT being tested for HSV****

What Happens if I Test Positive for HSV?

HSV is an STI that cannot be cured; however, **symptoms can be treated.**

- There are specific treatments for the first outbreak and following outbreaks
- The earlier a person begins their treatment during an outbreak, the shorter the outbreak will be.

- In the case of a high number of outbreaks (6 or more per year) a medication can be taken on a daily basis to help control the outbreaks.
- It is *very* important to remember that **people who are infected can still live happy lives and continue to have satisfying sexual and intimate relationships with other people.**
- If you currently have a partner, communication, education and sexual protection are key.

How Can I Protect Myself from HSV?

You will never be 100% protected from HSV when engaging in sex, even if you are using protection. **Condoms do not provide full protection because it can affect any area in the boxer short region.**

Proper and consistent use of these safer sex practices will help to protect you from HSV:

- **Vaginal Sex (including sex toys):** Latex external (penis) condom, non-latex external (penis) condom **OR** internal (vaginal) condom.
 - **Oral Sex (penis):** Non-lubricated external (penis) condom **OR** flavoured condom.
- **Oral Sex (vagina or anus):** Dental dam. You can make your own dental dam from an unrolled external condom (non-lubricated or flavoured). Simply snip off the tip of the condom and then snip up one side and unroll. See our 'Dental Dam' pamphlet for more information.
- **Anal Sex (including sex toys):** Latex external (penis) condom **OR** non-latex external (male) condom.
- **Mutual Masturbation:** Washing hands after masturbating your partner and before touching your own mouth and/or boxer short area

If you would like further information on STIs, please feel free to drop by our Centre or contact us by phone or email.

Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!

Location:

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Hours:

Monday: 9am – 4:30pm
 Tuesday: 9am – 4:30pm
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