

Herpes

What is herpes? It is a common infection, in children and adults, caused by a virus. Symptoms include:

- Painful sores in mouth/gums and on lips ("cold sores," "fever blisters")
- Fever and headache -OR
- Painful sores on genitals

Symptoms resolve within a week, but can recur with illness, sun exposure, or stress.

Although herpes is usually mild, it can be dangerous for:

- *Pregnant women-Genital sores at delivery can cause severe illness in the baby.*
- *People with immune problems (e.g., HIV/AIDS, cancer chemotherapy, organ transplant, taking steroid medication).*

How does herpes spread? Oral (mouth) herpes spreads by:

- Touching the mouth sores or saliva
- Kissing on the lips
- Sharing food, bottles, pacifiers, eating utensils, mouthed toys, and toothbrushes

Genital herpes spreads by sexual contact or sexual abuse.

When is herpes contagious?

- Several days *before* the start of symptoms until the sores are healed
- After exposure, it can take two to eight weeks to develop symptoms.

How do I know if my child has herpes? If you see the symptoms, see your doctor. Herpes is diagnosed by the typical symptoms. Sometimes swabs and cultures are done.

What should I do if my child has herpes?

Treatment: Follow your doctor's recommendations:

- Help your child recover by encouraging rest, nutrition, and plenty of fluids to drink.
- For severe or frequent outbreaks, medication might be prescribed.

If your child has immune problems or severe illness, see your doctor immediately. Special medication can help prevent and treat the illness.

- **Keep your child home:** until the mouth sores are healed or can be covered

To limit the spread:

- Cover lip sores with a bandage. Wash hands well after touching them.
- Don't expose newborns, people with immune problems, and pregnant women.
- Don't kiss children on the mouth.
- Don't share food, pacifiers, bottles, or toothbrushes. Clean and disinfect eating utensils, cups, mouthed toys, and dining tables after each use.
- Children with genital lesions should be examined and tested by an experienced physician. If herpes or another sexually transmitted disease is diagnosed, the child should be evaluated for sexual abuse and Children's Protective Services should be notified.