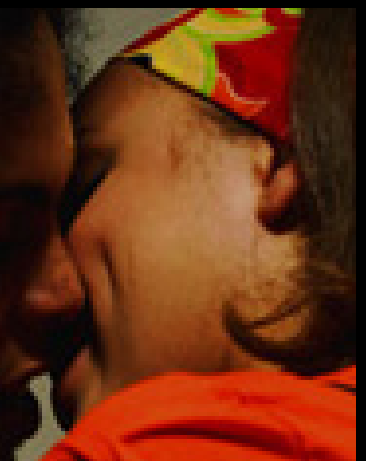


GENITAL HERPES

Genital herpes is caused by a virus - similar to the one that gives you cold sores around your lips. The difference is that genital herpes causes painful sores on and around your genitals. There is no known cure. However, if you think you have caught genital herpes you should go to your local sexual health (GUM) clinic straight away, as there are tablets you can take to help reduce the infection, but they must be taken within 72 hours of the start of any symptoms.



		Woman's sexual organs (front)												
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		Woman's sexual organs (side)												
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		Men's sexual organs												
		<table border="0"> <tr> <td>1 Scrotum</td> <td>7 Urethra</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 Testicle</td> <td>8 Penis</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3 Vas deferens</td> <td>9 Foreskin</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4 Seminal vesicle</td> <td>10 Glans</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 Bladder</td> <td>11 Anus</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6 Prostate gland</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	1 Scrotum	7 Urethra	2 Testicle	8 Penis	3 Vas deferens	9 Foreskin	4 Seminal vesicle	10 Glans	5 Bladder	11 Anus	6 Prostate gland	
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SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Both men and women may have one or more symptoms including:

- Itching or tingling sensation in the genital or anal area.
- Small fluid-filled blisters. These burst and leave small sores, which can be very painful. In time, they dry out, scab over and heal. With the first infection, they can take between 2 and 4 weeks to heal properly.
- Pain when peeing, if pee comes into contact with any of the open sores.
- A flu-like illness, backache, headache, swollen glands or fever.

GENITAL HERPES

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS (cont')

When there are symptoms, the virus is very infectious.

Repeated infections are usually not as bad. The sores are fewer, smaller, and less painful and heal more quickly.

GETTING IT

You usually catch herpes by direct contact with sores during sex, though you can also catch it even when there are no sores present. The virus affects the areas where it enters the body. This can be by:

- Kissing (mouth to mouth).
- Penetrative sex (when the penis enters the vagina or anus).
- Oral sex (from mouth to the genitals or genitals to the mouth).

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

At your sexual health (GUM) clinic, a doctor or nurse will take a sample from any visible sores using a cotton wool or spongy swab.

You should get the results in about two weeks. However, if the doctor or nurse thinks you may have herpes, you may be given tablets to reduce the severity of the infection straight away, as these are only effective within 72 hours of the start of symptoms.

A doctor, nurse or health adviser will tell you about what you can do to feel better and how to avoid passing the virus on to others.

LOOKING AFTER YOU & YOUR PARTNER

During an episode of herpes, the blisters and sores are highly infectious and the virus can be passed on to others by direct contact. To prevent this from happening you should avoid:

- Kissing when you or your partner have cold sores around the mouth.
- Having oral sex when you or your partner have mouth or genital sores.
- Having any genital or anal contact, even with a condom, when you or your partner have genital sores.
- Using saliva to wet contact lenses if you have sores around your mouth.

If you have frequent episodes of herpes, you should go to your local sexually health (GUM) clinic to discuss possible treatments. Treatment isn't always necessary, but it's best to check.

GENITAL HERPES

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Herpes does not affect a woman's ability to become pregnant, but if you get infected or have a herpes episode in the first three months of pregnancy there is a small risk of miscarriage. You should tell your midwife you have had genital herpes so they will be aware of and can help you with any potential problems through your pregnancy and birth.

Also, if you get a herpes episode towards the end of pregnancy it can cause the baby to be born early and may mean that it is necessary to give birth by Caesarean section. However, most women with genital herpes have an entirely normal pregnancy and a normal delivery.

It is very unusual for babies to be infected with herpes.

If you think you may have genital herpes, contact your local sexual health (GUM) clinic and make an appointment. It's easy and completely confidential.

For more information on sexual health (including HIV), call the Sexual Health Line free (from the UK) on 0800 567 123, textphone (for people with hearing impairments) 0800 521 361 or phone your local NHS sexual health clinic.