

Genital Herpes

Genital herpes is a viral infection that is spread during sex. Symptoms of genital herpes include blisters in the genital area (eg, penis, buttocks, anus, vulva). The blisters become painful ulcers. Some people have no symptoms at all.

Other symptoms:

- Itching or burning feeling in the genital or anal area
- Flu-like symptoms, including fever
- Swollen glands
- Pain in the legs, buttock, or genital area
- Vaginal discharge
- A feeling of pressure in the area below the stomach

Symptoms are usually most severe when they first appear. Outbreaks usually become less intense and less frequent over time. Most people have an outbreak of genital herpes more than once in their life. The frequency of these outbreaks varies from individual to individual.

During outbreaks, these steps can speed healing and help keep the infection from spreading to other sites of the body or to other people:

- Keep the infected area clean and dry
- Try not to touch the sores
- Wash hands after contact
- Avoid sexual contact from the time you first notice symptoms until the sores have healed

Several tests are available to diagnose genital herpes. Some tests use blood while others require a swab of the blister. It is possible to spread herpes even if there are no visible ulcers. It is not possible to catch herpes by touching a surface (door knobs, toilet seat, bed sheets).

Several medications are available to treat genital herpes (acyclovir, valacyclovir, and famciclovir). These drugs help to speed healing of ulcers in people who have just been infected or in those who are having repeat outbreaks. Some people who have herpes outbreaks take medicine every day to prevent future outbreaks or prevent spread to their sex partner.

Genital Herpes cannot be cured, it will always be in the body.

There are ways to lower the risk of being infected with genital herpes. People should use a latex condom every time they have sex. Sex (oral, vaginal, and anal) is not recommended if a person has blisters or ulcers. Keep your immune system strong to limit outbreaks by eating nutritious food, get adequate exercise and rest. Avoid drugs, limit alcohol intake and do not smoke.

Sources and/or additional resources:

Web MD: <http://www.webmd.com/genital-herpes/default.htm>

Family Doctor.org: <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/herpes.html>

Mayo Clinic: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/genital-herpes/basics/definition/con-20020893>

Up-To-Date: http://www.uptodate.com/contents/genital-herpes-beyond-the-basics?source=search_result&search=genital+herpes&selectedTitle=1~5

If you are a registered Millersville University student and you have questions or you need to make an appointment, please call Millersville University Health Services at 871-5250.