

Herpes

Created 2 Jul 2009 - 3:27pm

Herpes infections are caused by a [virus](#) [1]A small infective organism which is incapable of reproducing outside a host cell., either herpes simplex virus type I or II. Herpes simplex I is the virus that causes cold sores. This virus can also cause genital herpes, and is now the most common cause of new genital herpes infections in young adults. Genital herpes is also caused by the herpes simplex II virus, and this is the most common cause of recurring lesions.

Are you at risk?

Genital herpes is a sexually transmissible infection. Transmission occurs via intercourse, even when no herpes lesions are visible. Condom use for vaginal or anal sex, and the use of barrier protection like dams, can help prevent this although protection is significantly less than 100%.

A number of effective anti-herpes drugs are available by prescription, and there are national guidelines outlining their use. If your regular partner (regardless of HIV status) has genital herpes, he or she should get preventive (sometimes called suppressive) herpes treatment prescribed to stop outbreaks and to lower your risk of infection. Herpes treatment used preventively does not reduce the infection risk to zero.

If your partner has oral herpes (cold sores on the face or around the mouth) it is very important that he or she does not perform oral sex on you from the time that he or she gets the warning 'tingle' to the time that the infection has completely cleared up. People who already have antibodies to HSV-1 (regardless of whether they can recall having cold sores in the past) will not contract it again from their partner(s). If you do not have this protection from antibodies however, it is possible for you to get herpes in the genital region from a partner's oral infection, whether or not he or she has any visible lesions.

Symptoms

These may include:

- Itching and tingling in the genitals;
- Painful sores or blisters around the vagina/anus;
- Burning/pain when urinating;
- Recurring vulvovaginal thrush may also sometimes be caused initially by outbreaks of genital herpes.

Herpes and HIV

Outbreaks of genital herpes may occur more often, and be more severe, if your immune system is weakened by HIV. Some women also report herpes lesions that take a very long time to heal.

It is also possible for undiagnosed 69 herpes infections, which have not caused symptoms in the past, to be 'reactivated', and cause symptoms. This can happen if your CD4 count gets very low (below 200) and then is subsequently improved by [ARV](#) [2]A medication or other substance which is active against retroviruses such as HIV. treatment.

Treatment

Medical educators urge the aggressive treatment of herpes infections in people with HIV. It can be treated with drugs named aciclovir (Zovirax), valaciclovir (Valtrex) or famciclovir (Famvir). These drugs are very safe and have almost no side effects. However, they do need to be prescribed by a doctor.

Improving your immune system with ARV can greatly reduce your susceptibility to herpes outbreaks. In

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addition, avoiding triggering factors can all help reduce the recurrence of herpes.

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Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/125>

[2] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/122>

[3]

<http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/treat-yourself-right/female-parts/sexually-transmissible-infections-stis/chlamydia>

[4] <http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/treat-yourself-right/female-parts/sexually-transmissible-infections-stis>

[5]

<http://www.napwa.org.au/resource/treat-yourself-right/female-parts/sexually-transmissible-infections-stis/syphilis>