

Genital Herpes

The Facts



As this brochure contains only general information, professional advice from your medical practitioner should be sought before applying the information in this brochure to particular circumstances. You should not rely on any information contained in this brochure without first obtaining professional advice.



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GENITAL HERPES

What is genital herpes?

Genital herpes is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the herpes simplex viruses type 1 (HSV-1) and type 2 (HSV-2).

How do people get genital herpes?

Herpes can be passed on through skin to skin contact e.g. oral, vaginal or anal sex without a condom. Condoms provide protection only to the covered genital area. You can get herpes from a partner who does not have a visible sore and may not know that he or she is infected.

What are the signs and symptoms of genital herpes?

Most people infected with HSV-2 are not aware of their infection. The first outbreak usually occurs within two weeks after the virus is transmitted, and symptoms of tingling and blisters like cold sores, are seen around the penis, vagina or anus. The sores typically heal within two to four weeks and can be extremely painful. Flu-like symptoms, including fever and swollen glands, may be experienced in a first episode of genital herpes.

After a first episode of genital herpes a person can experience symptomatic recurrences (outbreaks). However, over time these recurrences will become less frequent.

What are the complications of genital herpes?

- Genital herpes can frequently cause psychological distress in infected people.
- Herpes can make people more susceptible to HIV infection, and it can make HIV-infected individuals more infectious.

How is genital herpes diagnosed?

Herpes is easily diagnosed in the laboratory. Your doctor will take a sample from the sore(s) and send it for testing to the laboratory. A blood test is available that detects the antibodies, but the results are not always clear-cut.

Is there a treatment for herpes?

There is no permanent cure for herpes, but there are treatments that can shorten and prevent outbreaks.

