

Living with Herpes

What is herpes?

- Herpes is a virus that you can get from sex.
- Herpes can give you sores or blisters. It does not cause any other health problems.
- There are 2 types of herpes. One gives you sores or blisters near your mouth. These are often called cold sores. The other gives you sores or blisters near your genitals.
- Herpes is very common, 1 in every 6 people have herpes.



How did I get herpes?

- You can get herpes from having sex with someone who has herpes. This includes sex in the vagina, mouth or anus (butt). You could have also gotten herpes by touching genitals to genitals, even if you didn't have sex.
- Anyone can get herpes.

How do I live with herpes?

- Most people do not have any signs of herpes.
- When people do have signs of herpes, they will have an "outbreak". These are sores or blisters on their vulva, anus, penis, pubic bone or thighs. These sores might hurt.
- You may have more outbreaks the first year. After the first year your outbreaks will happen less often and will be shorter. Many people stop getting outbreaks completely.

Is there medicine for herpes?

- Yes, there is medicine for herpes. But people do not need to take medicine all the time.
- Your doctor can give you medicine to take before you have an outbreak.

What else can I do to stop outbreaks?

- Eating well, sleeping enough and taking care of yourself will lower the number of outbreaks.
- When you have an outbreak keep the area dry. Try not to touch the sores. Some people find sitting in a mix of warm water, salt and white vinegar helps.

How can I lower my chances of giving someone else herpes?

- Use condoms. Condoms lower your chances of passing herpes to someone else. But it is still possible to pass herpes if you use a condom.
- Do not have sex when you have an outbreak.
- Talk to your partner about herpes.

How can I talk to my partner about herpes?

- It can be hard to tell your partner about herpes. Explain that herpes is very common.
- There is no way to know when or where someone got herpes.
- Talk about why it's important to use condoms and not have sex during an outbreak.

If I have herpes, does that mean my partner does too?

- No. You can get herpes the first time you have sex with someone who has it. Or you can have sex with someone who has herpes 100 times and not get it.

What if I am pregnant?

- Make sure your doctor knows that you have herpes.
- The doctor can give you medicine to help you not have outbreaks.
- If you have an outbreak right before you have your baby, the doctor might want to do a c-section.
- It is very rare for a baby to get herpes from their mom (less than 1%).

Support groups

- herpesopportunity.com
- hranyc.tripod.com

To learn more about herpes, talk to your CHN health educator:

