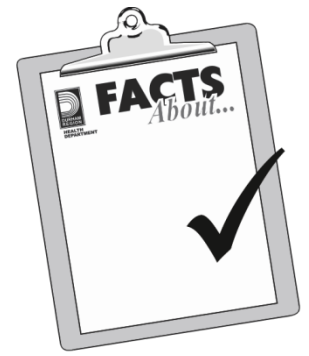




# FACTS

## About...



HEALTH DEPARTMENT



# Genital Herpes

## What is it?

Genital herpes is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by herpes simplex viruses type 1 (HSV-1) or type 2 (HSV-2). The virus can cause painful blisters on the mouth, genitals, buttocks, anus, and thighs. An infected person stays infected for life and may have several recurrences.

## How is it spread?

The virus is spread through sexual contact, including oral, vaginal, and/or anal sex. You can pass on the virus when you have sores or blisters on your mouth or genitals that are easy to see, but you can also pass on the infection without having any visible symptoms.

## What do I look for?

If you have symptoms, you will most likely feel itching or tingling on your skin and then develop painful blisters that turn into sores. With the first infection a person can have:

- fever
- joint pain
- flu-like signs
- swollen and tender lymph nodes in the groin area
- very painful sores that can take 2 to 3 weeks to heal
- pain during urination

People with recurrent infection experience mild symptoms before blisters develop. These symptoms can include: itching, tingling, or pain in the area.

New blisters may develop for up to 5 to 7 days after the first group appears. Also they often come back weeks to months later since the virus remains for life. When blisters do come back, they are usually less painful and heal faster. They may develop in the same area as before, or in another area.

When sores are present, there is an increased risk of being infected with other STIs.

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For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-668-2020 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



## How is it treated?

There is no treatment that can cure genital herpes. Medicines can be taken to prevent or shorten recurrences. The sores should be kept clean and dry. Soaking in a shallow tub of salty water may help. Cotton underwear should be used, as cotton does not hold moisture and will speed up the healing process. After touching the sores, it is important to wash your hands to avoid spread to other parts of the body.

## How can I protect myself?

The only sure way to protect you is not to have sex. The next best way is to practice safe sex. The use of condoms during sex helps to provide some protection against herpes. If you have genital herpes you should tell your sex partner(s) so they know they may be at risk of becoming infected. You should not have sex (oral, vaginal, or anal) when blisters or sores are present, or when you feel a recurrence coming on, because you can infect your partner(s).

If you are pregnant, tell your doctor that you have genital herpes. The virus can be spread to the baby during birth.

To help prevent recurrences:

- Get enough rest and exercise
- Try to eat a well balanced diet
- Take care of your body and avoid stress
- Return for check up visits as your doctor asks
- Use condoms with lubricant to lower the chance of exposure to future infections

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