



# Better2Know

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## Herpes Fact Sheet

### What is Herpes?

Herpes (Herpes Simplex) is a very common and highly infectious virus which has two types: Herpes Simplex 1 (HSV 1), which is the most likely cause of cold sores, typically around the mouth; and Herpes Simplex 2 (HSV 2) which typically causes sores around the genitals.

The Herpes viruses (both HSV 1 and HSV 2) are transmitted by contact with an active sore. Both virus types can be spread by any body contact including oral, vaginal and anal intercourse.

### What are the symptoms (if any)?

Up to 60% of people who have HSV are unlikely to know they are infected as their symptoms will be minimal or non-existent.

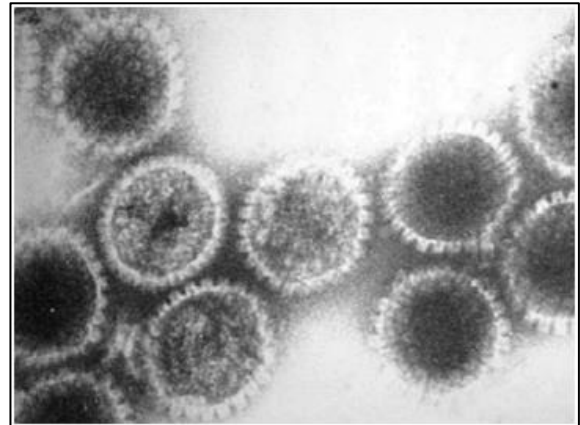
For those people who do have symptoms when the virus is active, then these are usually visible sores or blisters.

### How is it treated?

Like several other viral infections, once it is caught, Herpes Simplex (HSV 1 and HSV 2) stays in the body forever and a minority of those infected get recurrent outbreaks.

Fortunately, there are ways to decrease the frequency and severity of the outbreaks. There are anti-viral medications available (both creams and pills) which can help control the infection. In addition, there are lifestyle changes which can also help control the time between outbreaks and their severity.

You should not have any form of unprotected sexual intercourse whilst you have any symptoms of HSV 1 or 2 infections.



*Electron micrograph of HSV*

### What happens if you do not get treated?

If Herpes is left untreated, there is an increased risk of getting other STIs, including HIV.

In women, untreated Herpes can cause complications during pregnancy and labour which can be managed by your doctor or midwife. There is an increased chance of recurrent symptoms during pregnancy. These will not harm your baby but do mean that some women who have previously been asymptomatic may notice symptoms for the first time whilst pregnant.

### Better2Know Testing Information

If you have symptoms you may get tested for Herpes at any time. If you do not have any symptoms you should wait 28 days after any incident you are concerned about.

Better2Know's standard Herpes test uses urine or a swab of the suspected blister if you have symptoms, and blood if you do not.

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