

If passing urine is difficult, try urinating in the bath of salt water.

- Keep the affected area dry
- Drink plenty of water. It is important not to hold back from passing urine
- Get plenty of rest
- Eat lots of vegetables and fruits. Avoid constipation
- Take a pain killer such as aspirin / paracetamol.
- An antiviral drug called *aciclovir* may be prescribed, especially for a severe attack. This drug rapidly stops viral shedding from lesions and effectively prevents formation of new lesions. However, it is unable to get rid of the virus for good from the body.

HSV and Pregnancy

Having herpes does not affect a woman's ability to become pregnant.

The major problem is development of herpes near delivery. The risk of transmission to the fetus is high if the mother develops herpes for the first time during pregnancy. If genital sores are present at the time of delivery, *aciclovir* therapy could be commenced and the mother may be advised to have a caesarian section to reduce the risk of infection to the baby.

Management of women with a past history of genital herpes depends on whether genital sores are present at the time of

delivery. If no lesions are observed then a vaginal delivery can be allowed with close observation of the baby. If sores are present a caesarian section may be recommended.

HSV and Cervical Cancer

To date there is no evidence that HSV infection can result in cervical cancer. Women with HSV however should have a pap smear test regularly.

The consistent and correct use of condoms is the best protection. However, condoms do not provide complete protection as the herpes sores may not be covered by the condom and viral shedding may occur.

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Herpes Simplex Virus

Genital herpes is caused by the herpes simplex virus. There are two types of the virus:

Type I – usually causes sores on the mouth. Genital or anal sores can also occur due to this type.

Type II – commonly causes genital or anal sores and occasionally sores on or around the mouth.

Transmission

Is transmitted by close contact -

- During kissing – *It is possible to pass the virus from the mouth to the genital area*
- Through genital, oral or anal sex with an already infected person who has visible sores (symptomatic),
OR
- From a person who does not have visible sores (asymptomatic) but is shedding the virus silently.

Its important to know that :

- ◆ Once the virus gets into the body it stays in your body
- ◆ At certain times it gets reactivated and recurrent lesions occur.

Signs & Symptoms

- ◆ Usually occur after 2-7 days following a risky exposure. Some may be silently

infected (asymptomatic) and then transmit the virus to others some years later.

- Soreness/tingling sensation in the genitalia, followed by the appearance of small fluid filled blisters.
- The blisters burst, leaving a small sore with a red margin. Several sores are usually seen.
- When the sores appear for the very first time they are usually painful
- The sores take about 10-14 days to heal when the symptoms and signs develop for the first time. The recurrent attacks heal in about 5-7 days.
- A person is infectious from the time the virus enters the body until scabs fall off.
- Pain/burning sensation while urinating
- Flu like feeling

First Attack

In both sexes the symptoms and signs of the very first attack are usually more severe than the subsequent attacks.

Recurrent Attacks

Recurrences occur in approximately three quarters of patients.

Factors that reactivate the virus

- Stress, fatigue and anxiety
- Fever
- Menstruation

- Certain drugs
- Infections
- Suppressed immune systems (HIV Infection)
- Pregnancy

During a symptomatic attack of herpes, the blisters and sores are highly infectious and the virus can be passed on to others by direct contact. Therefore, avoid having –

- any genital or anal contact . It is best to wait for a few days after the lesions have healed before having sexual intercourse, preferably using a condom
- oral sex

There are certain things one could do. Genital herpes frequently causes psychological distress among people who know they are infectious.

- Immediately see a doctor, preferably at a STD clinic as this is the best time to diagnose the illness and start treatment.
- Seek counselling
- Having herpes is a nuisance, but it is not the end of the world

Management

- Keep the ulcers and genital area clean. Bathe sores with salt water (prepare a basin of salt water by adding 2 teaspoonful of salt/litre or 1 cup in a bath). Do this for 5-10 minutes, 2-4 times a day.