



GENITAL HERPES

Genital herpes is an STD that causes painful sores on and around the genitals. The same family of viruses also causes “cold sores” around the mouth. Genital herpes is spread by direct contact with open sores, usually during sex. If you touch herpes sores, wash your hands with soap and water to avoid spreading the disease. Herpes is not spread by toilet seats, bathtubs, swimming pools or hot tubs.

It is possible to pass the virus to your sex partners even when you have no sores, so safer sex using a latex condom is always important. However, remember that the areas of skin not covered by the condom are not protected. You can get genital herpes through oral sex even from cold sores. To prevent spread, split open a condom to use over the woman’s genital area during oral sex. After the sores from the first attack heal, the herpes sores may appear again from time to time. There is no cure for genital herpes, but medication may shorten the attacks and



make the sores less painful. Some new drugs may prevent attacks altogether; however, once you have herpes, you are infected for life.

The symptoms and signs

Tingling or itching in the genital area may appear within a week of having sex with an infected person. A cluster of tiny blisters appears. These blisters burst and leave painful sores, which last from two to three weeks. A fever and headache may occur in the first attack.

What to look for

Females:

- sores inside or near the vagina, on the genitals, near the anus, or on the thighs and buttocks
- tender lumps in the groin

Males:

- sores on the penis, around the testicles, near the anus, and on thighs and buttocks
- tender lumps in the groin

Both males and females can get sores in the mouth or in the genital area after oral sex with an infected person.

How genital herpes is treated

If you think you may have genital herpes, see a doctor

as soon as possible. The doctor can give you medication to help ease the pain of the attack and control further attacks.

Keep the infected area clean and dry. Wash your towel before re-using. After bathing, use a hair dryer instead of a towel around the sores, or pat dry gently. Try to wear loose fitting clothing made of natural materials such as cotton.

If urinating is painful, pouring warm water over the area may help, or urinate in the bathtub just before getting out.



If you have any questions or problems about STDs, contact your local CLSC

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