

# Genital Herpes - The Facts



## **WHAT IS GENITAL HERPES?**

Genital herpes is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the herpes simplex viruses type 1 (HSV-1) and type 2 (HSV-2). Most genital herpes is caused by HSV-2.

## **HOW DO PEOPLE GET GENITAL HERPES?**

Herpes can be passed on through skin to skin contact e.g. oral, vaginal or anal sex without a condom. Condoms provide protection only to the covered genital area. You can get herpes from a partner who does not have a visible sore and may not know that he or she is infected.

## **WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF GENITAL HERPES?**

Most people infected with HSV-2 are not aware of their infection. The first outbreak usually occurs within two weeks after the virus is transmitted, and symptoms of tingling and blisters like cold sores, are seen around the penis, vagina or anus. The sores typically heal within two to four weeks and can be extremely painful. Flu-like symptoms, including fever and swollen glands, may be experienced in a first episode of genital herpes.

After a first episode of genital herpes a person can expect to have several (typically four or five) outbreaks (symptomatic recurrences) within a year. However, over time these recurrences will become less frequent:



## WHAT ARE THE COMPLICATIONS OF GENITAL HERPES?

- Genital herpes can frequently cause psychological distress in infected people.
- Herpes can make people more susceptible to HIV infection, and it can make HIV-infected individuals more infectious.

## HOW IS GENITAL HERPES DIAGNOSED?

Herpes is easily diagnosed in the laboratory. Your doctor will take a sample from the sore(s) and send it for testing to the laboratory. A blood test is available that detects the antibodies, but the results are not always clear-cut.

## IS THERE A TREATMENT FOR HERPES?

There is no permanent cure for herpes, but there are treatments that can shorten and prevent outbreaks.

**For further information,  
please speak with your doctor.**



Please consider your individual circumstances and consult your healthcare professional if you have any questions relating to the information contained in this brochure. This brochure contains general educational information only. It is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice or treatment and is presented for the sole purpose of disseminating information. \*Prices, where displayed, are correct at time of printing and are subject to change without notice.

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