What are the symptoms of herpes?

There are two types of herpes virus: HSV1 and HSV2. Both types can cause sores or blisters on or around the genitals or mouth.

Genital herpes often does not cause any symptoms. If you do have symptoms, you might notice:

- Painful blisters or sores on/around the genitals or anus. These sores typically heal within 2-4 weeks.
- Feeling like you have the flu when sores are present.
- Sores that come back several times within a year. The presence of the sores is called an outbreak.

HSV1, most commonly known as oral herpes, can also cause sores on the mouth or lips, which are called fever blisters.

How does someone get herpes?

- You can get genital herpes by having anal, oral, or vaginal sex with someone who has it.
- You can also get genital herpes if your genitals touch the infected skin or secretions (like saliva through oral sex) of someone who has it.
- You can get genital herpes even if your partner shows no signs of the infection.

How can I lower my risk for herpes?

- The surest way is to not have sex.
- Have sex with someone who is not infected and who has sex with only you.
- Condoms can reduce your risk of getting genital herpes if used correctly (see other side for instructions) every single time you have sex.
- Washing the genitals, urinating, or douching after sex will not prevent any STD.

How is herpes treated?

- There is no cure for genital herpes, but there are treatments for its symptoms.
- You can only be tested for herpes if you have an active outbreak.
- Some medications can prevent blisters or make them go away faster.
- If you have several outbreaks in a year, a treatment called daily suppressive therapy can reduce your chance of passing the infection to your sex partners.

What can I expect to happen if I have herpes?

- Though most times you will not have symptoms, if you do, you might have several outbreaks a year.
- You have a higher chance of getting HIV if you have unprotected sex with a partner living with HIV.
- If pregnant, in rare cases you could pass the infection to your baby. If you have active genital herpes, inform your doctor. When going into labor, the doctor may do a cesarean delivery (“c-section”).
- Be sure to tell your doctor if you or your partner has genital herpes.

Most people who have herpes don’t know it; often this STD has no symptoms.

- Herpes is a sexually transmitted virus that anyone who is sexually active can get.
- If you have symptoms, the most common ones are painful blisters and sores.
- You can pass herpes to others without knowing it, even when you don’t have an outbreak or symptoms present.
- There is no cure for herpes, but there are treatments for the symptoms.
- You can have oral or genital herpes.