

# GET YOURSELF TESTED

Testing is confidential.  
If you are under 18 years old,  
you can consent to be checked  
and treated for STIs.

## Why Does it Matter?

People with genital herpes may be more likely to transmit or acquire HIV during sex.

Although rare, herpes can damage the nerves to your bladder. This makes it hard to urinate (pee). Sores near the urethra or vulva can also make it hurt when you pee.

## What if I'm pregnant?

Herpes can be passed from mother to baby during pregnancy or childbirth. This can lead to serious health problems for the baby. If you have genital herpes and are pregnant you should talk with your provider about ways to protect your baby from getting herpes.

## What about my sex partner(s)?

Since there is no cure for herpes, once you have it, you will always have the virus in your body. This means that it can be passed to your partner(s) during oral, vaginal, and anal sex when you have sores, and sometimes even if there are no symptoms. It is important to talk openly and honestly with any current or future sex partners. If you'd like advice about how to talk to your partner(s), visit <http://www.itsyoursexlife.com/stds-testing-gyt/article/talk-to-your-partner>.

Genital herpes is a sexually transmitted infection. Your sex partner(s) should be checked for genital herpes even if they have no symptoms. You should not have oral, vaginal, or anal sex when you or your sex partner(s) have sores, or if you think you are getting an outbreak.

## To learn more

Contact a health care provider or your local STI clinic.

To learn more about STIs, or to find your local STI clinic, visit [www.health.ny.gov/STD](http://www.health.ny.gov/STD).

You can find other STI testing locations at <https://gettested.cdc.gov>.



Department  
of Health

# Genital Herpes

**Herpes is one of the most common viral infections in the United States.**

**Most people who have genital herpes have no symptoms, or have only mild symptoms.**

**About one of every six people aged 14 to 49 years have genital herpes.**

**You can get herpes from someone who has no sores or symptoms.**

## What is Herpes?

Herpes is a skin infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). There are two types of herpes that are sexually transmitted infections (STIs), meaning you can get them through someone during sex or direct skin-to-skin contact:

- HSV-1 usually causes infections of the mouth such as “cold sores” or “fever blisters” on the lips.
- HSV-2 usually causes genital herpes (on or around the penis, scrotum, labia, vagina, or anus).

Both types of herpes can infect the mouth and genitals.

## How Can I Prevent Herpes?

- **Use a Condom:** Using a latex or polyurethane condom or dental dam every time you have oral, vaginal, or anal sex can lower your chances of getting herpes and other STIs, like syphilis, gonorrhea, and HIV.
- **Condoms won't always stop herpes from spreading.** There may be an infection on skin that the condom doesn't cover.
- Not having sex is the only sure way to avoid getting genital herpes.

## What if I Have Herpes?

- **Get Tested:** If you think you may have herpes, or you have been exposed, do not have oral, vaginal, or anal sex and go to a health provider. Tell the health care provider that you are concerned about herpes. Not all providers check for herpes as part of regular STI testing. Do not have sex until you get your test results.
- **Get Treated:** There is no cure for herpes, but there is medicine to help treat the symptoms. When you take this type of medicine:
  - it is less likely that the herpes will spread to your partner(s) when you have sex; and
  - you may have fewer sores and other symptoms.

Some people stop having any symptoms with the medicine, but they still have the virus in their body.

## Signs and Symptoms

Herpes is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with someone who is infected. You can get herpes from someone who has sores on their lips, skin, or genitals. These symptoms are sometimes called an “outbreak” of herpes.

Those who do have symptoms usually have an outbreak within 2-3 weeks after they were infected.

The first symptoms (primary outbreak) are usually the worst. Signs and symptoms may include:

- fever, headache, and muscle aches,
- painful blisters and skin ulcers in or on your mouth, genital area, and/or anus. Blisters may also be “hidden” in a woman's vagina; and
- tender and swollen glands, or lymph nodes, which may develop in your groin.

If you do not get treatment, your symptoms will usually go away within 3 to 4 weeks.

Your sores will heal, but you will still have herpes. The herpes virus hides from your immune system. This means you will not have symptoms for a while. Herpes can become active again and cause new sores in the future. This is called “recurrent” herpes. Some people don't have noticeable symptoms after a first outbreak, but it can still be spread to others during sex.

Some people will have repeated outbreaks after the sores have healed.

- These outbreaks usually hurt less and are not as bad as the first time.
- Recurrent herpes often starts with a burning or itchy feeling 1 to 2 days before a skin rash begins.