PROTECT YOURSELF + PROTECT YOUR PARTNER

# genital herpes

## THE FACTS

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## THE FACTS

- Genital herpes (JEN i tell / HER pees) is a sexually transmitted virus.
- Genital herpes is common in both men and women in the U.S.
- Most people who have genital herpes don't know it. There are often no symptoms.
- If you have symptoms, the most common ones are painful blisters and sores.
- You can pass genital herpes to others without knowing it.
- There is no cure for genital herpes, but there are treatments for the symptoms.
- Genital herpes does not usually cause serious health problems.

## PROTECT YOURSELF + PROTECT YOUR PARTNER

### HOW CAN I LOWER MY RISK FOR GENITAL HERPES?

- The **surest way** to prevent genital herpes is not to have sex or to have sex only with someone who's not infected and who has sex only with you.
- Condoms can reduce your risk of getting genital herpes if used the right way every single time you have sex. But a condom protects only the area of the body that it covers. Areas the condom doesn't cover can become infected.
- Washing the genitals, urinating, or douching after sex will **not** prevent any sexually transmitted disease (STD).

## How can I find out if I have genital herpes?

Ask a doctor. Blood tests may help determine if you have genital herpes.

## What are the symptoms of genital herpes?

Genital herpes often doesn't cause any symptoms. If you do have symptoms, you might notice:

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

There are two types of genital herpes virus—**HSV1** and **HSV2.** Both types can cause sores or blisters on or around the genitals. HSV1 can also cause sores on the mouth or lips, which are called **fever blisters.**

## How does someone get genital herpes?

- You can get genital herpes by having sex with someone who has it. "Having sex" means having anal, oral, or vaginal sex.
- 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.

## What can I expect to happen if I have genital herpes?

### MEN AND WOMEN

- You can expect to have several outbreaks (usually four or five) a year. Over time you can expect to have fewer outbreaks.
- You have a higher chance of getting an HIV infection if you have unprotected sex with a partner living with HIV.
- Knowing that you have genital herpes may make you feel worried or sad. Talk with a doctor about your concerns.

### PREGNANT WOMEN

- In rare cases, you could pass the infection to your baby.
- If you have active genital herpes when you go 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.

## When should I be tested?

You should be tested for genital herpes if:

- You have any symptoms (like an unusual sore).
- Your partner has genital herpes or symptoms that might be genital herpes.

## If I have genital herpes, what does that mean for my partner?

- Your partner may have genital herpes, too.
- Be sure to tell your recent sex partners, so they can go to their doctors to be evaluated and maybe treated.
- Avoid having sex with an uninfected partner when you have visible sores or other symptoms.
- Be aware that even if you don't have symptoms, you can still infect your partner.

## Can genital herpes be treated?

- There is no cure for genital herpes, but there **are** treatments for its symptoms.
- Some medicines can prevent the 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.

## A message for everyone

### PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR PARTNER.

Always see a doctor if your partner is being treated for genital herpes. Also see the doctor if you or your sex partner notice any symptoms, such as an unusual sore.

If you have genital herpes, you should be tested for other STDs. Be sure to tell your recent sex partners, so they can get tested too. Talk openly and honestly with your partner about genital herpes and other STDs.

## For more information

- Talk to your doctor.
- Call 1-800-CDC-INFO.
- Visit www.cdc.gov/std/herpes.

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