



Herpes: The STI Facts

What is herpes?

Herpes is a viral infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV) that is passed from person to person through skin to skin contact with someone who has the infection.

Herpes is a very common sexually transmissible infection (STI). Most people who have herpes don't get symptoms and never know they have the virus. Even without symptoms, it can be passed on.

Herpes sores can show up on the mouth or lips. This is known as cold sores or oral herpes. When herpes sores show on the vagina, penis or anus (bottom), this is called genital herpes. Herpes can begin with tingling, itching or pain in the infected area. You might find blisters that break and become painful sores. The sores heal by themselves but may cause itching and pain.

The first time a person has herpes symptoms it can be extra painful and can last a long time. Some people only have symptoms once. Others have symptoms that keep on coming back, but symptoms usually get better over time. If a person has lots of symptoms that keep coming back, antiviral medicines can help.

How do you get herpes?

Herpes can be passed on through skin to skin contact and when you have foreplay, non-penetrative sex, vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has herpes. Using protection such as condom and/or dam is a great and effective way to protect you from herpes.

How can I protect myself from herpes?

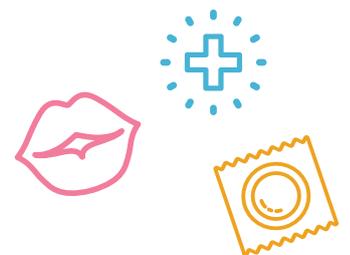
- Use condoms during vaginal, oral and anal sex. Condoms will reduce the chance of herpes from being passed on. Make sure you change condoms between partners and when sharing sex toys.
- Use dams during oral sex. Dams will prevent skin to skin contact and prevent herpes from being passed on.
- If you have herpes symptoms, avoid skin-to-skin contact with others until symptoms have resolved.
- Test for STIs and HIV every 3-12 months. It is important and part of a healthy confident sex life.

How do I test for herpes?

Herpes is not a part of routine STI testing as you must have symptoms to test. Herpes is tested for by taking a swab from a blister or sore while you have symptoms.

If you have herpes, you should get tested for other STIs. STI tests are easy, confidential and nothing to be ashamed about.

You can get an STI test at your local doctor, a sexual health clinic and some university health clinics. You can call the [Sexual Health Infolink](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sexual-health/sexual-health-infocentre) on 1800 451 624 (free call) to find the closest service to you.





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How do you treat herpes?

There is no cure for herpes. Antiviral medication can help to reduce herpes outbreaks and symptoms. People who regularly have uncomfortable symptoms may be able to take these medications every day.

Where can I find more information on herpes and other STIs?

For information and support about herpes, other STIs and your sexual health, you can call the [Sexual Health Infolink](#) on 1800 451 624 (free call) to speak to a specialist sexual health nurse. It's free, confidential, and non-judgemental. You can also visit the [International Student Health Hub](#).

If you would like an interpreter to help you access health services or information, please contact the [Translating and Interpreting Service](#) on 131 450.

Scan the QR code to find out more about herpes and STIs

