

# Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV)

## What is HSV?

HSV stands for herpes simplex virus. There are two types, HSV-1 and HSV-2, that infect humans.

## Who gets HSV?

Anyone can get infected; HSV is passed by coming in contact with someone's skin where the virus might be coming out, such as from a sore near the genitals (privates) or a cold sore or fever blister. About 1 out of every 4 adults in the United States has HSV infection. Even if a sore is not seen, the infected person may still be shedding the virus and can be infectious.

## What does HSV do?

The most common places that HSV causes infection are the lips, inside the mouth, on or near the genitals (privates), or in the crack of the butt. The virus can show up as a fever blister or cold sore on the lips, as sores inside the mouth, as clear fluid-filled bumps or open sores near or on the genitals, or as open sores or cuts in the crack of the butt. When someone has a bad immune system, such as from HIV, the HSV can go into the throat and cause pain with swallowing, into the brain and cause seizures or bad headaches, or into the lungs like a pneumonia.

## How can I get rid of the HSV?

When someone gets HSV, they have the infection for the rest of their life. The virus hides out in the nerves and can cause outbreaks when your immune system is low, when exposed to strong sunlight, or when the infected person has a lot of stress.

## How do I treat it?

The most common medicine we use to treat HSV is acyclovir (Zovirax). Other medicines you can take by mouth to treat this infection include famciclovir (Famvir), valacyclovir (Valtrex), or valganciclovir (Valcyte). Occasionally the virus gets resistant to these medicines and the infection has to be treated by medicines given by an IV. You may just need to take medicines when you have the sores or all the time to prevent the sores.

**If you have further questions, be sure to talk to your primary care provider or your health educator or nurse.**



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