NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT of HEALTH and SENIOR SERVICES

NJ HIV/STD Hotline
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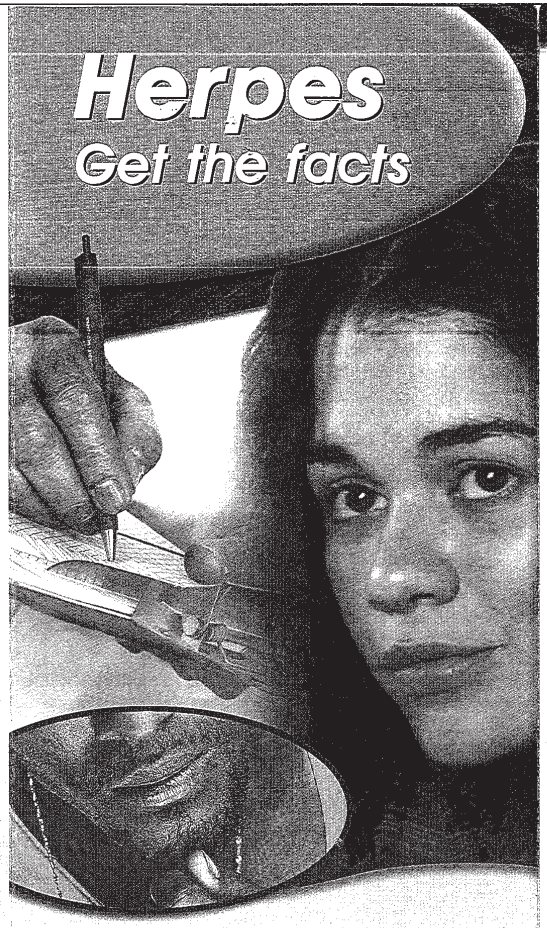
Herpes
Get the facts

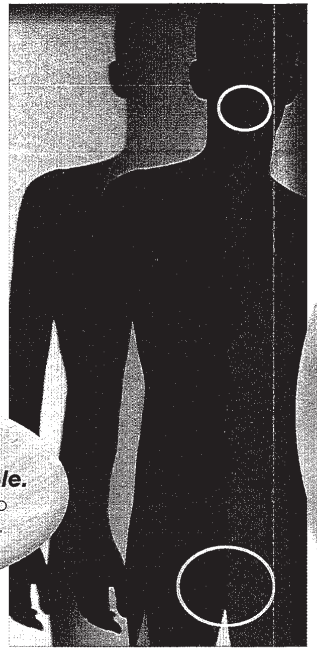


You may have herpes and not know it.

Herpes is an infection
caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV).*

There are 2 kinds of herpes:

- Oral herpes can cause cold sores or fever blisters on or around the mouth.
- Genital herpes can cause blisters or sores on or around the sexual organs.



Herpes affects millions of people.
But you can help stop the spread of herpes.

*This folder deals only with herpes simplex. There are other herpes viruses.

Please read:
Talk to your health-care provider! This folder is not a substitute for the advice of a qualified health-care provider. • The photos in this folder are of models. The models have no relation to the issues presented.

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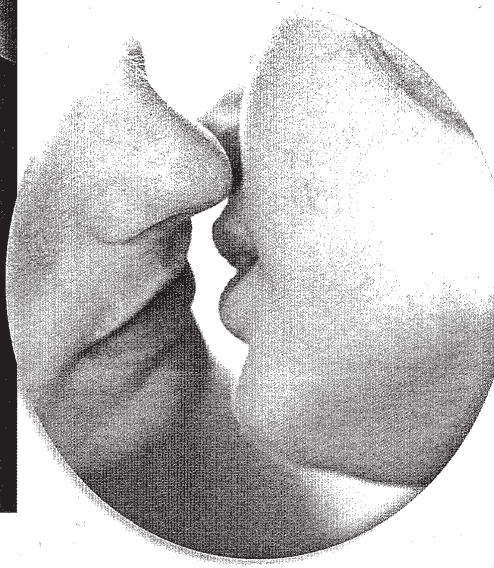
Price List A

How is herpes spread?

It depends on the type.

Oral herpes is usually spread through kissing.
This can happen if you kiss someone who has cold sores on or near the mouth.



Genital herpes is usually spread through sex.
You could get herpes if you have vaginal, anal or oral sex with someone who has herpes. Touching the person's genitals can also give you the virus.

Herpes spreads more easily when sores are visible.
But people with herpes can also spread the virus when they don't have sores.

What are the symptoms of herpes?

Some people get sores or blisters.

Itching, tingling, burning or pain may be felt in an area of the skin before the actual sores appear. Sores or blisters:

- can show up alone or in clusters
- fill with fluid and burst after a few days
- scab over and heal within 1-4 weeks.

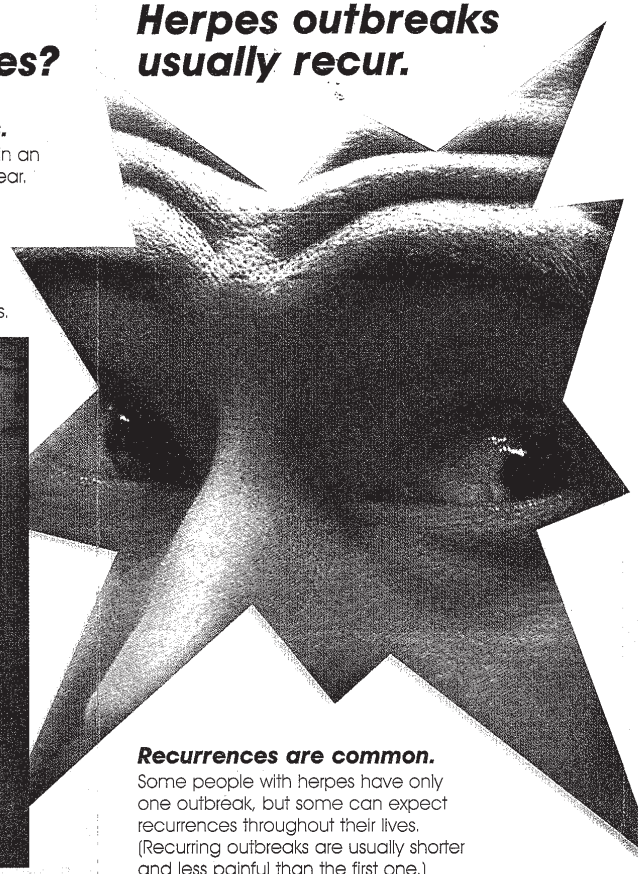
Many people with herpes show no symptoms.

Other problems may occur.

The first outbreak of herpes may cause:

- swollen glands in the groin area or in the neck
- fever, muscle aches and other flu-like symptoms
- genital pain while urinating or having sex (especially in women).

Herpes outbreaks usually recur.



Recurrences are common.

Some people with herpes have only one outbreak, but some can expect recurrences throughout their lives. (Recurring outbreaks are usually shorter and less painful than the first one.)

Certain things may trigger recurrences.

These include:

- illness
- fatigue
- stress
- menstruation
- trauma to the affected area (including sexual activity)
- excessive sun exposure.

You can prevent the spread of herpes.

Start taking precautions at the first sign of an outbreak. Avoid:

Kissing

Kissing is a common way to spread oral herpes if one or both partners have sores.

Having any kind of sex

Herpes can spread even when you don't have sores. Not having sex is safest. If you have sex, use a new male latex condom for each act of vaginal, anal or oral sex. Condoms are not 100% effective. And some STDs, including herpes, can be spread through contact with infected areas not covered by the condom. But when used properly, condoms can help protect you and your partner.

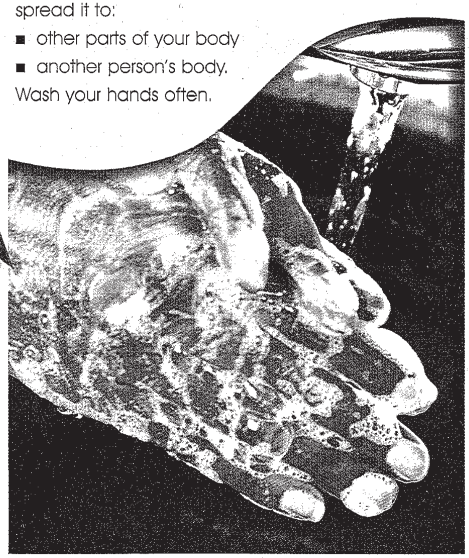
Also, ask your health-care provider about medication that can help reduce the risk of spreading herpes.

Touching the blisters and sores

Once herpes gets on your hands, you can spread it to:

- other parts of your body
- another person's body.

Wash your hands often.

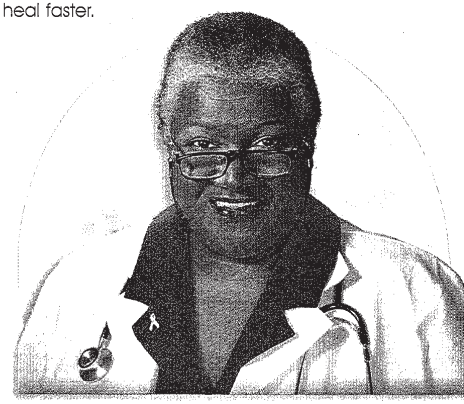


Herpes can be treated.

Talk to your health-care provider.

Herpes can't be cured, but medication may help you:

- have fewer and milder outbreaks
- heal faster.



Contact other sources of help.

These include:

- hospitals, health clinics and mental health centers
- state and local health departments
- the National Herpes Resource Center at the American Social Health Association
  www.ashastd.org/hrc
  1-919-361-8488
- a herpes support group in your community
- the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  www.cdc.gov/std
  1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)
  1-888-232-6348 (TTY).

Fight herpes with knowledge.