

## Fact Sheet

### Genital herpes

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#### What is genital herpes?

Genital herpes is a common infection affecting up to 1 in 5 people. It is caused by a virus in the genital skin, called Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV).

There are 2 types of viruses, HSV1 and HSV2. Both of these viruses may infect other parts of the body, such as around the mouth (cold sores)

#### How will you know if you have genital herpes?

Herpes may cause painful, tingling or itchy blisters or ulcers (moist sores). Other symptoms may be aches and fever especially with the first herpes attack. Genital herpes occurs when such sores are around the genital area: penis, scrotum, vagina or anus.

These sores generally settle within a week or so. Herpes sores can return however, after days, weeks, months or years.

Some people have very mild symptoms. Some people do not have any symptoms. However, the virus can still be passed on if you do or don't have symptoms. The virus can still be passed on through unbroken skin. This is called "shedding".

#### How can you be checked for genital herpes?

If you think you have herpes, you can be checked at any sexual health clinic or by your own doctor.

Simple things to help relieve symptoms:

- salt baths
- dry yourself with a hairdryer
- simple pain relief medication.

#### How do you get genital herpes?

Genital herpes is passed from one person to another by close skin to skin contact. This may include sex. If you have sex with someone who has herpes sores around the genital area you may become infected.

You may also become infected if you have oral sex with someone who has cold sores around the mouth.

Sex which places you at risk for genital herpes includes:

- penis - vagina sex
- penis - anus sex (anal sex)
- penis - mouth sex (oral sex)
- vagina - mouth sex (oral sex)

#### What is the treatment for genital herpes?

Not everyone needs treatment. If you get herpes a lot, medication can help.

Treatment helps make herpes sores milder, heal more quickly or occur less often.

If you are pregnant and get herpes for the first time, it may harm your developing baby or newborn. You will probably need treatment.

*If you have already had herpes, and fall pregnant, it usually doesn't cause any problems. In either case, please tell your doctor or midwife.*

#### What if genital herpes is not treated?

As herpes cannot be cured, there is no additional harm if treatment is not taken.

#### What about partners?

Sexual partners who have never had any type of herpes infections (including herpes cold sores) are at a greater risk of getting herpes.

If you have HSV1 you can still be infected with HSV2.

If you or your partner have herpes, and are planning a pregnancy, please discuss this with your doctor or midwife.

**Telling a partner is not always easy.  
Sexual health counsellors can advise you on the best way to do this.**





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**How do you prevent genital herpes?**

Avoid sex as soon as you think any sores are present. Always use condoms or dams as this lowers the chance of getting herpes from people who may not have any obvious sores. However condoms do not entirely remove the risk because they may not cover the infected area.



Centre	Address	Contact	Hours
<b>Western Sydney Sexual Health Centre</b>	Jeffery House 162 Marsden Street Parramatta	02 9843 3124	Mon, Tues & Fri 0900 am - 0400 pm Weds 1000 am - 0400 pm Thurs 0400 pm - 0700 pm (appointment only)
<b>Kelly Close Services</b>	Kelly Close Mt Druitt	02 9881 1206	Mon 0900 am – 0400 pm Weds & Fri 0900 am – 0100 pm

**For further information refer to the brochures on the male condom, the female condom and safer sex.**

**What if I have more questions?**

**If you have any questions or worries please phone the clinic and ask to speak to a nurse or a counsellor.**

**We welcome further feedback on this brochure as a way of continually improving our service.**

**Send your feedback to:**  
WSLHD-Get\_Involved@health.nsw.gov.au

This written information is for guidance only and does not replace consultation and advice by your health care provider.