

Neonatal herpes is a rare disorder affecting newborn infants infected with the herpes simplex virus (HSV), also called herpesvirus hominis. In most instances, a parent with oral or genital herpes transfers the disorder to an offspring before, during, or shortly after birth. Symptoms vary from mild to severe depending on which of two types of herpes simplex virus is involved. Type 1 HSV is responsible for the more severe cases of the disorder while patients with Type 2 HSV usually present with milder symptoms. The diagnosis of neonatal herpes is difficult and requires the physician to maintain a high level of skepticism and wariness. Frequently, neither parent is aware that he or she is carrying the virus. HSV infection must be considered for any neonate presenting with non-specific symptoms such as fever, poor feeding, lethargy and/or seizure. Any rash accompanied by fluid-filled blisters (vesicles) should be cultured for HSV, and because such tests take days before the results are known, anti-viral treatment should be started.