Herpes simplex virus (HSV) is a virus that causes infections. It is very contagious. There are two types of this virus. One type (HSV-1) usually causes sores around the lips or inside the mouth that are sometimes called fever blisters or cold sores. The other type (HSV-2) usually causes sores on the genitals (private parts). Either type can infect the mouth, genital area or another part of the body.

HSV spreads most easily when a person comes in direct contact with an infected person’s mucous membranes, saliva, or the oozing fluid from a sore. Mucous membranes are the moist skin that lines the inside parts of the body such as the mouth, nose and vagina. **That is why it is extremely important not to kiss or have sex with anyone when herpes sores are present.** However, HSV can be spread even when the infected person has no sores or obvious signs of infection. The herpes virus cannot live very long outside of the body. It is unlikely that you can get it from a toilet seat.