



[Home](#) → [Health Topics](#) → Genital Herpes

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/genitalherpes.html>

# Genital Herpes

**Also called:** Herpes genitalis

Genital herpes is a sexually transmitted infection [<https://medlineplus.gov/sexuallytransmittedinfections.html>] (STI) caused by a herpes simplex [<https://medlineplus.gov/herpessimplex.html>] virus (HSV). It can cause sores on your genital or rectal area, buttocks, and thighs. You can get it from having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has it. The virus can spread even when sores are not present. Mothers can also infect their babies during childbirth.

Symptoms of herpes are called outbreaks. You usually get sores near the area where the virus has entered the body. The sores are blisters which break and become painful, and then heal. Sometimes people do not know they have herpes because they have no symptoms or very mild symptoms. The virus can be more serious in newborn babies or in people with weak immune systems.


Repeat outbreaks are common, especially during the first year. Over time, you get them less often and the symptoms become milder. The virus stays in your body for life.

There are tests that can diagnose genital herpes. There is no cure. However, medicines can help lessen symptoms, decrease outbreaks, and lower the risk of passing the virus to others. Correct usage of latex condoms can reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of catching or spreading herpes. If you or your partner is **allergic to latex** [<https://medlineplus.gov/latexallergy.html>] , you can use polyurethane condoms. The most reliable way to avoid infection is to not have anal, vaginal, or oral sex.

## Start Here

- **About Genital Herpes** [<https://www.cdc.gov/herpes/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/herpes/es/about/acerca-del-herpes-genital.html>]
- **Genital Herpes** [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/genital-herpes>] (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- **Genital Herpes** [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/genital-herpes/symptoms-causes/syc-20356161?p=1>]  
(Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/genital-herpes/symptoms-causes/syc-20356161?p=1>]


## Diagnosis and Tests

- **Herpes (HSV) Test** [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/herpes-hsv-test/>]  (National Library of Medicine)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-del-virus-del-herpes-simple-vhs/>]

## Images

- **Genital Herpes** [<https://skinsight.com/skin-conditions/genital-herpes-simplex-virus-hsv/?lmiw9cApl=1>] (VisualDX)

## Clinical Trials


- **ClinicalTrials.gov: Herpes Genitalis** [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Herpes+Genitalis%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

# Journal Articles

## References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Small molecule UCM05 inhibits HSV-2 infection via targeting viral glycoproteins and...  
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40684179>]
- Article: Cytokine secretion patterns distinguish herpes simplex virus type 2 meningitis from...  
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40534882>]
- Article: MicroRNAs as regulators of NLRP3 inflammasome activation in herpes simplex virus...  
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40510795>]
- Genital Herpes -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Herpes+Genitalis%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

## Find an Expert

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/>]  
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>]
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/>] 

## Children

- Genital Herpes (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/herpes.html>] (Nemours Foundation)  
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/herpes.html>]

## Teenagers

- Genital Herpes (For Teens) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/std-herpes.html>] (Nemours Foundation)

## Women

- Genital Herpes [<https://womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/genital-herpes>]  
(Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)  
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/genital-herpes>]

## Patient Handouts

- Condom Use: An Overview [<https://www.cdc.gov/condom-use/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Genital herpes [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000857.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000857.htm>]
- Genital herpes - self-care [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000653.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000653.htm>]
- Herpes viral culture of lesion [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003739.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003739.htm>]
- Serum herpes simplex antibodies [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003352.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)  
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003352.htm>]



## MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Genital herpes [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000857.htm>]

Genital herpes - self-care [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000653.htm>]

Herpes viral culture of lesion [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003739.htm>]

Serum herpes simplex antibodies [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003352.htm>]

## Related Health Topics

Herpes Simplex [<https://medlineplus.gov/herpessimplex.html>]

Sexually Transmitted Infections [<https://medlineplus.gov/sexuallytransmittedinfections.html>]

## National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Genital Herpes* is the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>]

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies.

MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our disclaimer

[<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our quality guidelines

[<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>] .

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)