

MANAGING YOUR ORAL HERPES



Oral herpes is also called herpes labialis, herpes simplex-1, or HSV-1. Most infections spread by contact during childhood, so 80% of adults have been exposed to HSV-1. HSV-1 is a virus in the family of viruses that cause chickenpox, shingles, cold sores, and mononucleosis.



Drugs (acyclovir, valacyclovir, and famciclovir) can help shorten or prevent an attack. Aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen can help if pain is present.



Limit your time in the sun—too much sun can make blisters return. Always apply sunscreen.



HSV-1

HSV-1 causes blisters around the mouth and gums. It spreads mainly by nonsexual intimate contact with saliva of an infected person, for example, to a child kissed by an adult who's shedding the virus. HSV-1 enters the body through a break in the skin.



Avoid and learn how to deal with physical and emotional stress. Stress can make blisters return.



Wash your hands with soap and warm water often, especially after using the bathroom, to avoid spreading the infection.



Most people never have symptoms. Those who do can have itching, pain, burning, or tingling before blisters form. Then small blisters start and form ulcers and crusts. Other symptoms are eye pain, red eyes, fatigue, fever, headache, itching, muscle aches, and tearing from the eyes.

Call your doctor right away, or go to the emergency room, if you have a severe headache, shortness of breath, or eye pain, or bright lights bother you.



Your doctor will make a diagnosis by checking the area for blisters. Doing blood tests for antibodies against HSV and taking fluid from a blister for study are usually not necessary.

