

HERPES SIMPLEX VIRUS FACT SHEET

What is herpes?

Herpes is caused by either herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1) or type 2 (HSV-2). The virus can infect the mouth area (oral herpes) or genital area (genital herpes). Oral herpes is common in children, and once infected, they will always carry the virus.

What are the symptoms of oral herpes?

The first time symptoms appear after being infected by the virus (primary infection), symptoms may include cold sores, fever blisters, swelling of the mouth, fever, swollen lymph nodes, irritability and/or headache. After primary infection, the virus may be reactivated (recurrent infection) and cause cold sores and fever blisters later in life. Recurrent infection is milder than primary infection. Asymptomatic infection is possible.

How long do the symptoms last?

Up to two weeks.

How does oral herpes spread?

Oral herpes is very contagious and spreads through direct contact with an infected individual. Do not kiss or share utensils with someone who has cold sores or fever blisters. Asymptomatic shedding of the virus is possible, so in general do not let people kiss children on the lips.

Can my child go to school with oral herpes?

Yes, unless the child has primary infection with fever and uncontrolled drooling.

How is oral herpes treated?

Contact your healthcare provider for treatment. Antiviral medication may be prescribed. Oral herpes lesions can be painful; pain reliever may be prescribed as well.

How can the spread of oral herpes be prevented?

Oral herpes is spread through direct contact with herpes lesions (cold sores, fever blisters). Avoid contact, such as kissing and utensil sharing, with anyone exhibiting herpes lesions.

Where can I learn more about oral herpes?

For more information please contact Contra Costa Public Health at 925-313-6740 and visit our website at <http://cchealth.org/cd/> or <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/ear-nose-throat/Pages/Oral-Herpes.aspx>