

# GENITAL HERPES

## What causes it?

Herpes simplex virus: same family of viruses that cause cold sores in the mouth.

## How do I get it?

- contact including direct skin to skin contact with sores on genitals or cold sores on mouth during sexual intercourse, kissing or oral sex
- an infected person may spread the virus even if they have no visible symptoms or sores
- pregnant women with genital herpes sores can pass the virus to their newborn during delivery

## What are the symptoms?

Some people have genital herpes without any symptoms. Others may have an initial outbreak within 3 weeks of being exposed to the virus that lasts 10 to 20 days with symptoms such as:

- tingling sensation at the site of infection
- tiny blisters, sores or paper cuts that come and go on the skin of the vagina or penis, near the anus, or on the thighs or buttocks
- larger, painful sores or ulceration's on the vulva or penis
- heavy, watery discharge in women
- itching around vagina, penis or anus
- tender lumps in groin
- headaches, fever, flu symptoms, or enlarged lymph nodes, especially in the first attack
- The sores heal at the end of the outbreak. Repeated, less painful outbreaks of herpes sores can happen any time.

## How do you test for it?

- physical examination of the vagina or penis by a doctor or nurse
- swab of the sore or sometimes a blood test

## What treatment is available?

- there is no cure but the symptoms can be treated with prescription anti-viral medication to help control or prevent the sores
- the sores will go away after a while by themselves or your health care provider may recommend medication if you have frequent outbreaks
- keep the infected area clean and dry and wash your hands after touching the sores

### **What complications can happen?**

- even if the sores heal, you are infected for life
- repeated outbreaks can occur any time since the virus stays in the body and becomes active periodically: new blisters may be triggered by stress, a menstrual cycle in females, or injury

### **What precautions should I take if I have herpes?**

- let your partner know about the infection: you could be infectious even if you don't have sores at the time
- keep in mind that even condoms do not always protect against the spread of genital herpes

### **Where can I get tested?**

You can get tested at:

- YCDC (Yukon Communicable Disease Control)  
#4 Hospital Road  
667-8323 or 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8323
- Community Health Centre
- [Medical Clinics](#)