

**HERPES, ORAL**

Commonly, these infections are acquired for the first time in early childhood and may reappear throughout a person's lifetime (recurrent infection).

**CAUSE** Herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1).

**SYMPTOMS** Primary infection causes blister-like sores inside the mouth (gingivostomatitis) and on the gums. Fever and irritability may also occur. Recurrent infections (cold sores, fever blisters) appear on lips and face. Some children may have the virus in their bodies, but do not develop symptoms. Herpes simplex virus can also cause infections of the eyes, fingers, and central nervous system.

**SPREAD** By close person-to-person contact, such as through direct contact with saliva (e.g., kissing) or touching the fluid from the blisters or sores.

Most experts believe that herpes is not spread from lipsticks, towels, washcloths, drinking glasses, or toys. However, to prevent spread of other infectious bacteria, personal items should not be shared.

**INCUBATION** It takes 2 to 14 days from the time a person is exposed for the first time until symptoms occur.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD**

First occurrence (primary infection): up to 2 weeks, occasionally up to 7 weeks.  
Recurrent infection: usually 3 to 5 days.

**EXCLUSION** Childcare: Primary infection - until those children who do not have control of their oral secretions no longer have active sores inside the mouth.  
Recurrent infections (fever blisters and cold sores) - None.

School: None.

**TREATMENT** A topical medication may be prescribed.

**PREVENTION/CONTROL**

- Encourage children not to touch the sores.
- **Regular and thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.** Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after having contact with the sores or saliva.
- Wear disposable medical gloves when touching the sores is necessary (e.g., when applying medication).
- DO NOT kiss an infected person on or near the mouth when sores are present.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled.  
(See pgs 35-41)