

SEXtalk)))

Answers to Your Questions about Sex and Relationships

Have a ??? Email sextalk@u.arizona.edu

factoid

Over half of U.S. college students say LOVE is the most important ingredient to a good sex life (Details Magazine 1997, n=1752)

Q. My girlfriend and I both have oral herpes. Is there any reason why we should not engage in oral sex when I have a cold sore?

A. Absolutely. If your cold sore comes into direct contact with your partners' genital area, you may transmit your herpes infection to your partner, resulting in genital herpes. The same goes for your girlfriend giving you oral sex when she is having an outbreak -- her cold sore could give you genital herpes. Whenever you or your girlfriend have a cold sore (or feel one coming on) you would be wise to avoid intimate contact, including kissing. Even though you both have oral herpes, you are not immune to additional infection.

There are two types of herpes simplex: herpes simplex type 1 (HSV-1) and herpes simplex type 2 (HSV-2). The majority of oral herpes cases are caused by HSV-1 and the majority of genital herpes cases are caused by HSV-2; however, both type-1 and type-2 can occur in the genitals, oral area or both. Some herpes facts:

- About 50 percent to 80 percent of the adult population in the United States has oral herpes.
- Most people contract oral herpes when they are children by receiving a kiss from a friend or relative.
- About one in five adults in the United States have genital herpes, but only one-third of those people are aware that they have the virus.
- Herpes can be transmitted when there are no symptoms present. This is called asymptomatic shedding.
- There are no documented cases of a person getting genital herpes from an inanimate object such as a toilet seat, bathtub or towel. Herpes is a very fragile virus and does not live long on surfaces.

For more information, contact the Herpes Resources Center online at <http://www.ashastd.org/hrc/educate> or call (919) 361-8488

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