

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

Check out the ASUA Spring Break Safety Fair, going on March 3rd from 10 - 2pm on the UA Mall.

Q What is the difference between HSV-1 and HSV-2?

A. Despite the fact that people tend to focus on their differences, oral herpes (HSV-1, which stands for herpes simplex virus) and genital herpes (HSV-2) are very similar. In fact, these two clinically indistinguishable viruses are so alike that even their preferred area of infection can flip flop. This is especially true of oral herpes, which can infect the genitals during oral sex. You read that right: a person with oral herpes (cold sores) can transmit the virus to their partner's genitals while "going down" on them.

Genital herpes is most likely to spread during sex without visible symptoms. That means that you may be at risk even though your partner doesn't have an outbreak, due to asymptomatic shedding of the virus. On the other hand, there's a very good chance your partner doesn't know they have genital herpes to begin with, since **of the estimated one in five Americans that have HSV-2, 90% are not aware of their infection.** Oral herpes is even more common, with 50-80% of the population testing positive for it – many of them being first exposed as children through a social kiss.

The main difference between HSV-1 and HSV-2 tends to be related to our perceptions of the viruses. Oral herpes is seen as the "good one" that results in cold sores or fever blisters on the mouth, while genital herpes is often viewed as the "bad one" that infects below the belt. The reality is more complex.

While there is no cure for either type of herpes, antiviral medication can help speed healing, decrease pain and virus transmission, and even prevent future outbreaks. Fortunately, outbreaks tend to lessen over time on their own and many people may be able to identify and avoid factors that trigger them. Managing stress, getting enough sleep, eating well and engaging in physical activity are all good ways to help keep herpes dormant, thereby preventing outbreaks.

For more information on herpes and sexually transmitted infections, go to www.ashastd.org.



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