

Hope & Healing

Herpes Easing Genital Herpes

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

Herpes infections are caused by two viruses, either herpes simplex virus I or herpes simplex virus II. Herpes virus I usually causes cold sores and herpes virus II more often causes burning, soreness, and blisters of the genital area. And you can become feverish and weak with herpes virus II, sick all over.

In fact, after the presence of herpes virus II is proven, you may feel like you've been offered a one-way ticket to hell, because it is incurable.

But you haven't been, so stop feeling bad. Read on for a ticket back home.

A Lazy Virus _____

Herpes is an example of a latent infection. If you're like most people, once the initial attack comes and goes (usually in two to three weeks), the virus is beaten back by your immune system and lies buried along a nerve.

When your immune system lets its guard down or you're stressed out or don't eat right or because of unknown factors, the virus may make another appearance. Attacks after the first episode (called a recurrence) are usually infrequent and are usually not as severe as the first attack.

There are exceptions. Some persons will seem to be destined for constant misery caused by genital herpes. Even so, there are drugs that can reduce these attacks by up to 90% of the time.

Herpes is far from a hopeless condition and there are many things you can do at home to help ease the discomfort.

Tests and Observations _____

Tests for herpes II include opening the blisters for fluid to culture or examine on a slide. They are not always performed because they are not good enough to always be sure. Usually the appearance of the infection is enough. The diagnosis is crucial if you're pregnant, because the virus can spread to your baby during delivery.

Easing the Pain _____

- **Soap and water.** As with any sores, you may be tempted to reach into your medicine cabinet for petroleum jelly, antibiotic ointment or cortisone cream. Don't. Soap and water will keep the area free of other infection. Petroleum jelly blocks out air, slowing healing, and cortisone may actually make the infection spread.

- **Warm things up.** During severe attacks, warm baths or showers several times daily have helped some persons but not everyone. When you get out of the bath, using a hair dryer set on cool will sometimes soothe and help dry the sores out.

- **Get some air.** Wear loose-fitting, cotton panties. Air is essential to healing. Cotton panties or nylon with cotton crotches allows the skin to breathe.

- **Cool-down urination.** Urine may be acidic, causing pain as it passes over the sores of genital herpes. Judith M. Hurst, RN, who coordinates a support group for persons with herpes II in the Toledo, Ohio area,

suggests urinating in the tub or shower when you finish bathing.

- **Touch not.** Although herpes II is usually genital, the virus can be passed to your mouth or eyes by touching an open sore and bringing your fingers to the other area. So, don't touch. And wash your hands if you think you may have come in contact with an open sore.

- **Call for medicines.** Several drugs have been proven to speed healing time and limit the severity of the attack. They are often but not always prescribed for the initial attack and for recurrences if they are frequent.

- **When pregnant, tell.** If you become pregnant, it is very important for you to inform your doctor, if he or she doesn't already know, because herpes can infect your baby.

- **Pap test early.** And, it's a good idea to get a yearly pap smear. Genital herpes was once thought to be strongly linked to cervical cancer but recent studies suggest the link is not as strong as once thought. Nonetheless, a yearly pap smear is still recommended.

The Mind-Body Connection _____

The fact that some persons carry the herpes virus for years without an attack,

while others have regular attacks, has caused speculation that stress is one of the reasons behind frequent attacks.

Dr. Christopher Stout of Denver, a clinical psychologist specializing in the causes of depressed immune systems, says that the answer is largely in the mind. "People who are more tense, depressed, carry more hostility, and are more easily aroused to anger, seem to suffer more frequent outbursts. These kinds of attitudes are thought to suppress the body's immune system."

Here's the problem. If you weren't subject to stress before you got herpes, getting it certainly causes stress which contributes to additional attacks. Here's how to avoid this roller coaster.

- **Learn all you can.** Read about herpes. Ask your doctor for material. Try to make sense out of what you can do to stay in control.
- **Join a support group.** The American Social Health Association (1-800-227-8922) can help you find one in your area. A support group offers emotional support from other persons who are also eager to share information.
- **Ask questions.** The A.S.H.A. runs a hotline that offers free advice to persons with herpes 24 hours daily. (1-800-227-8922).
- **Find professional help.** If you suffer sadness, depression, anger, or guilt, a good psychotherapist should be able to help you gain perspective in only a few sessions.
- **Rev up your immune system.** Today's research shows that our emotions trigger a response within the brain that releases natural chemicals within our immune systems, making it possible for us to fight disease.

Just how the brain and our immune systems talk to one another is now under intense study. But we already know enough to bolster our

resistance.

Summary _____

Face herpes with imagery. In a quiet place, get comfortable. Close your eyes, imagine yourself floating in space, among clouds. On one cloud, picture a scene of some place you remember with pleasure. Divide the cloud in half. Imagine herpes projected onto the left side. On the right, project possible solutions to the problem. Keep practicing until you place the problem of herpes in a new and broader context. Thereby your attitude is changed.

Invest energy in eating better, exercising, and getting plenty of sleep — all of which are habits that affect immunity and are likely to suffer during hard times.

Awaken the Miracle Within You

The Miracle of Being an Agent of God

Perhaps you know the song, "Make Me a Channel of Blessing." The idea is right but the word agent might be better than channel.

Here's why. Channels are hollow, without internal mechanisms to stimulate interest or accept responsibility. Agents are instructed to transact business. As agents we carry out our instructions well or not so well according to whether we're industrious or lazy, wise or stupid.

Our governing body sends us to represent the home government, negotiating all sorts of important arrangements. We advance or retard the cause of those who sent us by how well we carry out our instructions.

We are God's agents wherever we are, acting with a wide range of power through our: reason, intuition, free-will, and self-determination. So, we can be a good or efficient agent, or a poor agent, or a disgrace, according to the way we conduct life.

Practice His presence daily in all that you do as His agent and be a living witness to the glory of his name.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.