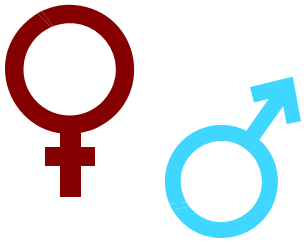
District Health Department #10
Family Planning

Genital Herpes

What is Genital Herpes?
Genital Herpes is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by two closely related viruses, herpes simplex virus type 1 and herpes simplex virus type 2. Both types of the virus are easy to catch. Genital Herpes is usually caused by the herpes simplex virus type 2 and oral herpes is caused by type 1. Once the virus is in the body it remains there for life.

What are the symptoms of Genital Herpes?
Most people with genital herpes have no symptoms and if they do the symptoms are mild. The most common symptom is a cluster of sores or blisters located on the vagina, vulva, cervix, penis, buttocks or anus. These sores may come and go several times a month. More severe symptoms that may occur during the first outbreak include:

- Blisters
- Burning feeling if urine comes in contact with sores
- Itching
- Open sores
- Pain in the infected area
- Swollen glands
- Flu-like feelings



Herpes is able to be transmitted from the very first signs of pain or itching until the scabs fall off. In some cases the disease can be passed when no symptoms are present.

Is Genital Herpes treatable?
There is no cure for herpes. However, antiviral medications can be taken to help shorten and prevent outbreaks and daily suppressive therapy can be used to reduce transmission to partners.

What if I don't get treated?
As mentioned above genital herpes is not curable. People who are living with the virus and do not know it are at great risk of passing it on to their partner. Sores will continue to appear in various outbreaks of various severity if medications are not taken. Genital herpes can have more severe effects on people with suppressed immune systems.

How can I prevent Genital Herpes?
The only 100% sure way to prevent getting any STD, including Genital Herpes, is to abstain from having sexual intercourse. Other methods that can help reduce the risk of being infected include:

- Using a condom during sexual intercourse every time
- Using a barrier for oral sex

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For more information please visit the Center for Disease control and Prevention website, http://www.cdc.gov/std/Herpes/default.htm