

HERPES, ORAL

Oral herpes infections are commonly 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, irritability, and tender, swollen lymph nodes 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.
INCUBATION	It takes 2 to 14 days from the time a person is exposed for the first time until symptoms occur.
CONTAGIOUS PERIOD	<u>First occurrence</u> (primary infection): up to 2 weeks, occasionally up to 7 weeks. <u>Recurrent infection</u> : usually 3 to 5 days. The greatest concentration of virus is shed during first occurrence infections with symptoms. Recurrent infections may occur due to a variety of “triggers,” such as stress, cold, or sunlight.
EXCLUSION	<u>Childcare</u> : Primary infection – Exclude children who do not have control over their saliva (drooling) until the mouths sores are gone. Recurrent infections (fever blisters and cold sores) – None. <u>School</u> : None.
TREATMENT	A topical medication may be prescribed.

PREVENTION/CONTROL

- Encourage children not to touch the sores. Do not kiss an infected person on or near the mouth when sores are present.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after having contact with the sores or saliva. **Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.**
- Wear disposable medical gloves when touching the sores is necessary (e.g., when applying medication). Dispose of gloves after use.
- Do not share food or drinks with children or staff.
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects, and surfaces at least daily and when soiled (see Section 2).

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.

