Genital Herpes

Genital herpes is a sexually transmitted disease (STD). It is spread from person to person only through sexual contact. Once a person is infected with herpes, the virus will always be in his or her body.

Some people with herpes have symptoms and others do not. Often, a person who has recently been infected with herpes gets sick with fever, body aches, and painful sores at the place where the body was infected (mouth, penis, vagina, rectum). This illness usually lasts about a week. When an infected person gets sick, it is called an “outbreak.” With each outbreak the painful sores will reappear, but the person probably will not be as sick as the first time.

There is no cure for genital herpes. Medicines can make an outbreak milder and less painful. There is, however, no way to rid the body of the herpes virus.

Once people have herpes, they may spread the infection to other people at any time. The virus is more likely to spread when the sores are present on the body. People infected with herpes must use a condom every time they have sexual contact. **It is very important that anyone infected with genital herpes tell their sexual partners that they also could be infected and may need to see their health care provider.**

The herpes virus can be spread from mothers to their babies during child birth. This can cause serious problems for the baby. Every pregnant woman with herpes should tell her health care provider that she is infected with the herpes virus. Health care providers can take precautions to prevent the infection from spreading to the baby.

The **only** way to keep yourself safe from sexually transmitted disease is to abstain from sex. If you do decide that you are going to be sexually active, it is important that you use a condom **every** time you have sex to prevent the spread of infections. See your health care provider for routine checkups to make sure you are disease-free.

**For more information about genital herpes or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), call your health care provider or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188.**