

Cold Sores (Herpes Simplex Virus Type 1 [HSV-1])

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are being provided with this fact sheet:

- Because you or your child may have been exposed to HSV-1.
 - For informational purposes only.
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General Information About Cold Sores

What are cold sores?

- Cold sores are an infection of the mouth, nose, and lips caused by the herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1). They are also known as fever blisters.
- There are two types of HSV. **HSV type 1 usually causes cold sores on the mouth** while HSV type 2 causes genital herpes.
- Once a person has HSV-1, the virus usually stays in the body and can occasionally cause symptoms.

Who can get them?

- Anyone can get HSV-1 and develop cold sores.
- People often become infected with this virus in childhood.

What are the symptoms?

- Sometimes a person can have HSV-1 and not have any symptoms.
- When a person is first infected with HSV-1 symptoms may include:
 - Fever (American Academy of Pediatrics defines fever as a temperature of 100.4°F [38°C] or higher)
 - Painful, red sores that eventually turn to blisters in the mouth, including the gums, and lips
 - the blisters have clear fluid that can bleed.
 - the blisters slowly dry and become scabs.
 - Cranky or fussy
- After the first infection, HSV-1 typically shows up as blisters on the lips. These are called cold sores or fever blisters.
- Some groups of people with HSV-1 are at higher risk of getting very sick or developing medical problems, including people who have a weakened immune system. People at higher risk should contact their healthcare provider if they think they've been exposed to HSV-1.

How is HSV-1 spread?

- The virus is most likely to spread the two weeks before cold sores appear and while cold sores are present.
- It is found in the fluid from the cold sores and in the saliva (drool) of a person who has cold sores.
- It can spread by:

- Touching the eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands after touching an object or surface that has the virus on it (for example, mouthed toys).
- Sharing utensils or cups with someone who has cold sores.
- Directly touching open sores (for example, kissing).

How Do I Know If My Child Has Cold Sores Caused by HSV-1?

HSV-1 can be difficult to diagnose because it can be confused with other infections that cause mouth sores (for example, hand foot and mouth disease, canker sores, thrush). A healthcare provider can tell if it is HSV-1 by ordering tests.

If you have additional questions or are concerned your child might have HSV-1, contact your healthcare provider. This fact sheet provides general information only.

What If My Child Has Cold Sores Caused by HSV-1?

Notify your child care provider or preschool immediately if your child has been diagnosed with HSV-1 and currently has cold sores.

How are cold sores treated?

- There are antiviral medications that can help shorten the healing time of cold sores. Talk with your healthcare provider about treatment options for your child.

How can I help prevent HSV-1 from spreading?

- Wash hands often.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid sharing cups, eating utensils, food, and drinks with anyone who currently has cold sores.
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize toys and other objects children put into their mouths.
- Cold sores should be covered with a bandage whenever possible.

Does My Child Need to Stay Home from Child Care?

No. Children who have been exposed to HSV-1 do not need to stay home.

Children who currently have cold sores caused by HSV-1 can continue to attend child care unless:

- They have a fever (temperature of 100.4°F [38°C] or higher) along with other symptoms.
- They cannot control their drool.
- They have open sores that cannot be covered.
- They do not feel well enough to participate in classroom activities (for example: unusually tired; cranky or fussy; or crying more than normal).

Please follow your child care program's sickness policy.

References

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Caring for our Children, Chapter 3 Health Promotion and Protection, 3.6 Management of Illness, 3.6.1 Inclusion/Exclusion Due to Illness
- Caring for our Children, Chapter 7 Infectious Diseases, 7.7 Herpes Viruses, 7.7.2 Herpes Simplex
- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 6th Edition. Pages 119-120