

The DC Health and Wellness Center

Questions? Want to get tested?

Call us to make an appointment or walk in and see us



Sexual health services for everyone in DC

The DC Health and Wellness Center provides confidential, comprehensive sexual health services to everyone who lives, works, or plays in DC.

Services are provided at low or no cost. These include: sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing, diagnosis, and treatment; PrEP; PEP; contraception; vaccines; rapid ART (HIV treatment); and mental health counseling.



202-741-7692



dchealthandwellness.org



77 P Street NE
Washington, DC 20002



Clinic Hours:
Mon Tue Wed & Fri: 9:00am-3:00pm
Thurs: 9:00am-11:30am only

Genital Herpes

Genital herpes is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by two viruses: Herpes simplex type 1 (HSV-1) and type 2 (HSV-2). Herpes is very common: more than 1 in 6 adults have HSV-2, and more than half of the adult population has HSV-1. Herpes can be transmitted through oral, vaginal, or anal sex. Most people with herpes do not have symptoms, but they are still at risk of transmitting the virus.



Symptoms and Complications

Most people who have genital herpes do not have symptoms.

- Symptoms usually present as one or more grouped sores or blisters around the genitals, rectum or mouth. This is commonly called an "outbreak."
- Sores are usually tender.
- Sores will usually improve in a few weeks.
- The first outbreak can present with fever, body aches, or swollen glands.
- Outbreaks can occur multiple times, but are usually shorter and less severe than the first outbreak.
- Sometimes a tingling sensation can happen before an outbreak begins.

If you are pregnant, genital herpes can hurt your unborn child.

- Genital herpes can lead to miscarriage or early delivery of your child.
- If you are diagnosed with genital herpes or have symptoms, please tell your clinician during your prenatal care visits.



Testing

If you have symptoms:

- Your clinician may diagnose herpes through a physical examination.
- Your clinician may use a swab on a sore to test for the herpes virus.
- Your clinician may do a blood test to see if you have ever been exposed to the virus. However, this test will not be able to tell you who gave you the infection.
- If you have a positive blood test, this will need to be confirmed with a second blood test.



Treatment and Prevention

Genital Herpes Treatment

- Herpes can be treated with medications, but it cannot be cured.
- Antiviral medications such as acyclovir, famciclovir, and valacyclovir can be used to shorten the length of symptoms.
- These medications can also be used before the symptoms of an outbreak start to reduce the risk of passing herpes to other people.

Prevention Tips

- Avoid touching the sores to prevent spreading the virus to other parts of your body.
- Talk to your sex partners about the risk involved in sex if you have been diagnosed with herpes.
- Daily suppressive therapy and condoms can reduce the risk of spreading herpes.
- Tell your prenatal care provider if you are diagnosed with herpes and you are pregnant.