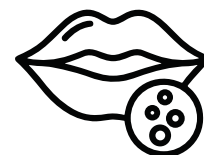


WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Herpes Labialis (Cold Sores)



What are cold sores?

Herpes labialis, commonly called cold sore or fever blister, is a common viral infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). Cold sores typically appear on or around the lips but can occur on the nose, cheeks, or inside the mouth. Once infected, the virus remains in the body and can become active again, causing future cold sores. They are contagious and can spread to others through kissing, sharing drinks, eating utensils, or lip products, and oral contact with another person's skin.

Cold sores usually start with tingling, burning, itching, or pain around the mouth and lips. This then develops into small fluid-filled blisters that may crust or scab on the sore. They can take up to 2 weeks to heal.

What is the treatment for cold sores?

There is no cure for herpes labialis, antiviral medications such as acyclovir, valacyclovir, or famciclovir, and good self-care can help reduce symptoms, speed healing, and lower the risk of spreading the virus to others.

What can trigger future outbreaks?

Common triggers include illness or fever, stress, sun exposure, fatigue, or injury to lips or mouth.

Decreasing exposure to triggers can prevent future outbreaks. Using lip balm with sunscreen, managing stress, and getting adequate sleep may help prevent outbreaks.

How can the spread of cold sores be prevented?

- Avoid kissing while sores are present
- Avoid oral contact until sores have completely healed
- Wash your hands after touching the sore
- Avoid sharing drinks, towels, razors, lip balm, lipstick, or other personal items

When to contact a healthcare provider?

Contact a healthcare provider if symptoms do not improve within 2 weeks, if outbreaks occur frequently or more than 6 times per year, or if sores appear in other spots than around the mouth.

NDSU

CENTER FOR
COLLABORATION AND
ADVANCEMENT IN PHARMACY

Sources: American Academy of Dermatology Association; Center for Disease Control; Mayo Clinic