Herpes Encyclopedia Article

Herpes

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Herpes

The Herpes simplex virus I (oral) and II (genital) are persistent, embarrassing, and often devastating sexually transmitted diseases. Symptoms can include small painful blisters or lesions around the lips, nose, mouth (cold sores), or genitals; fever; headaches; swollen lymph glands; and feelings of isolation and depression. Herpes spreads through direct contact with infected areas, and is only detectable with a blood test as the virus can remain dormant indefinitely. After an initial outbreak, herpes can disappear for months, only to recur during periods of stress or a weakened immune system. Between 50 and 80 per cent of the American adult population is infected with a form of herpes, yet only one third of these carriers ever experience symptoms. There is no known cure for herpes, but it is not life threatening, and advances in treatment have made living with herpes more manageable and less stigmatizing.

Further Reading:

Ebel, Charles. *Managing Herpes: How to Live and Love with a Chronic STD.* North Carolina, American Social Health Association, 1998.