

COLD SORES (Fever Blisters)

Cold sores have nothing to do with the common cold. They may appear on your mouth, lips, nose, cheeks or fingers. The Herpes Simplex virus Type I cause cold sores (not related to genital herpes). You get cold sores from someone who has an active condition through eating utensils, razors, towels or direct contact.

Symptoms start about 20 days after exposure. Pain or tingling often precedes small, fluid filled blisters by 1-2 days. Skin around the area is painful and reddened. Symptoms usually last 7-10 days. After the first infection the virus periodically reemerges at or near the original site.

Self Care

Cold sores generally clear up without treatment. The following steps may provide relief:

- Rest
- Take over the counter pain relievers or creams (they will not speed healing).
- Do not squeeze, pinch or pick at blister.
- Avoid kissing or skin contact with people while blisters are present.
- Wash hands frequently.
- Use sun block on your lips and face before prolonged sun exposure.

Seek medical help for frequent bouts of cold sores. A drug called acyclovir inhibits the growth of the herpes virus. The drug needs to be started during the prodrome phase before the blister.

A serious complication could occur if the virus is near your eye. If you experience burning pain or rash near the eyes, seek immediate attention from your physician.

Contact your physician if you have any questions or problems.