

Facts & Myths

The following facts and myths might be helpful in discussing genital herpes with a patient.



Myth The spread of genital herpes is largely under control these days.

Fact The prevalence of genital herpes remains high. In fact, genital herpes is the most prevalent STD in the US. As many as 1 in 5 adults (an estimated 50 million people) have genital herpes. The CDC estimates that 1 million new patients become infected with genital herpes each year.¹⁻³

Myth Most people with genital herpes know they are infected with the disease.

Fact Almost 90% of those infected are unaware they have the virus that causes genital herpes.¹

Myth Genital herpes is spread only during active outbreaks.

Fact Up to 70% of genital herpes transmission may be due to asymptomatic viral shedding.⁴

Myth Asymptomatic viral shedding occurs only in a small percentage of patients with genital herpes and occurs only right before or after an outbreak.

Fact Studies have shown patients can shed virus an estimated 30 to 100 days a year without symptoms and that 50% of asymptomatic viral shedding occurs more than 7 days from an outbreak.⁵⁻⁷ According to the CDC, asymptomatic viral shedding occurs even in patients with longstanding or clinically silent infection.³

Myth Avoiding sexual activity during recurrences is the best way to prevent the spread of genital herpes to a partner.

Fact While it is important to avoid sexual activity during recurrences, the CDC states that discordant couples should also consider suppressive antiviral therapy with VALTREX, along with consistent condom use, as part of an overall strategy to reduce the risk of transmission.*³

*In immunocompetent heterosexual adults. Safer sex practices should be used with daily therapy with VALTREX.

Please see full prescribing information for VALTREX.

There is no cure for genital herpes. Even with treatment, it may be possible to spread genital herpes to others.

WARNING: Thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura/hemolytic uremic syndrome (TTP/HUS), in some cases resulting in death, has occurred in patients with advanced HIV disease and also in allogeneic bone marrow transplant and renal transplant recipients participating in clinical trials of VALTREX at doses of 8 g per day.

The safety and efficacy of VALTREX for reduction in the risk of transmission of genital herpes have not been established in non-heterosexual patients, patients with multiple sexual partners, or patients with more than 9 episodes per year.

References:

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2. U.S. Census Bureau Web site. Available at: <http://www.census.gov>. Accessed on November 21, 2007.
3. CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site. Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/Trends2000/herpes.htm>. Accessed on November 21, 2007.
4. Mertz GJ, Benedetti J, Ashley R, et al. Risk factors for the sexual transmission of genital herpes. *Ann Intern Med*. 1992;116:197-202.
5. Data on file, GlaxoSmithKline.
6. Gupta R, Wald A, Krantz E, et al. Valacyclovir and acyclovir for suppression of shedding of herpes simplex virus in the genital tract. *J Infect Dis*. 2004;190:1374-1381.
7. Wald A, Zeh J, Selke S, et al. Virologic characteristics of subclinical and symptomatic genital herpes infections. *N Engl J Med*. 1995;333:770-775.