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Herpes
Behind the stigma
Karen Jensen, ND

Herpes is a virus that carries a lot of stigma. While it is most often associated with genital herpes or cold sores (fever blisters), the herpes family actually consists of eight different viruses that affect humans.

Types of herpes
Herpes 1 causes cold sores; herpes 2 causes genital herpes; herpes 3 causes chicken pox and may recur along nerve fibre pathways causing multiple painful sores called shingles; herpes 4 is the cause of mononucleosis, the official name for Epstein Barr virus and one of the possible triggers for chronic fatigue syndrome; herpes 5 is the official name of cytomegalovirus (CMV); herpes 6 can cause a variety of illnesses associated with fever (i.e., febrile seizures) and is known to cause roseola in small children; herpes 7 is similar to herpes 6; and herpes 8 is associated with Kaposi’s sarcoma.

It is estimated that 25 percent of herpes carriers have genital herpes and 80 percent have oral herpes (cold sores). The herpes virus can lay dormant for years and is brought on when the immune system becomes overburdened.

Cold sores
Symptoms of cold sores include small, painful, fluid-filled blisters that occur on the lips or around the mouth and usually last for 10 to 14 days.

Genital herpes
Symptoms of genital herpes vary and may be so mild as to go unnoticed. It may include lesions (usually fluid filled), fever, headaches, muscle aches, painful urination, and swollen lymph nodes. The sores can appear almost anywhere including the mouth, vagina, vulva, penis, testicles, scrotum, thighs, or buttocks. It is thought to be contagious even when there is no lesion, but it is definitely contagious when there are blisters.
Shingles

The first sign of shingles is burning pain and tingling in one area of the body. One to three days later a rash appears, often accompanied by a headache or fever. The rash then blisters and can last for two to three weeks. The virus can only be passed on if the blisters are broken, and only to those who have not had chicken pox. The person who catches it will develop chicken pox, not shingles.

Treatment

• Black current extract (Ribes nigrum) has properties against herpes 1, 2, and 3. Take 20 to 40 drops three times daily.

• At the first sign of a breakout, take 1,000 to 1,500 mg of lysine (amino acid) daily. Foods high in lysine include fish, chicken, beef, lamb, milk, cheese, beans, brewer’s yeast, and most fruits and vegetables. Avoid food high in arginine such as chocolate, coconut, oats, whole wheat and white flour, peanuts, and soybeans.

• Rhubarb-sage cream has been shown to be as active against herpes outbreaks as acyclovir (antiviral pharmaceutical).

• Indole-3-carbinol, found in broccoli, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts has been shown to arrest herpes.

• Self-heal (Prunella vulgaris) cream is effective against the herpes virus 1 and 2.

However, when it comes to preventing the activation of herpes, finding ways to alleviate stress and support your immune system are by far the best strategies.
