Herpes Labialis (Cold Sores)

You have a fever blister or cold sore (*herpes labialis*). These painful, grouped sores are caused by one of the herpes viruses (HSV1 most commonly). They are usually found around the lips and mouth, but the same infection can also affect other areas on the face such as the nose and eyes. Herpes infections take about 10 days to heal. They often occur again and again in the same spot. Other symptoms may include numbness and tingling in the involved skin, achiness, fever, and swollen glands in the neck. Colds, emotional stress, injuries, or excess sunlight exposure all seem to make herpes reappear. **Herpes lip infections are contagious. Direct contact with these sores can spread the infection. It can also be spread to other parts of your own body.**

TREATMENT

Herpes labialis is usually self-limited and resolves within 1 week. To reduce pain and swelling, apply ice packs frequently to the sores or suck on popsicles or frozen juice bars. Antiviral medicine may be used by mouth to shorten the duration of the breakout. Avoid spreading the infection by washing your hands often. Be careful not to touch your eyes or genital areas after handling the infected blisters. Do not kiss or have other intimate contact with others. After the blisters are completely healed you may resume contact. Use sunscreen to lessen recurrences.

If this is your first infection with herpes, or if you have a severe or repeated infections, your caregiver may prescribe one of the anti-viral drugs to speed up the healing. If you have sun-related flare-ups despite the use of sunscreen, starting oral anti-viral medicine before a prolonged exposure (going skiing or to the beach) can prevent most episodes.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU DEVELOP:

- Headache, sleepiness, high fever, vomiting, or severe weakness.
- Eye irritation, pain, blurred vision or redness.
- A prolonged infection not getting better in 10 days.

Document Released: 12/18/2006 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
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