

FEVER BLISTERS

What are fever blisters?

These are common names for fluid filled blisters that commonly occur on the lips. They also can occur in the mouth, particularly on the gums and roof of the mouth (hard palate), but this is rare. Fever blisters are usually painful; in fact, the pain may precede the appearance of the lesion by a few days. The blisters rupture within hours, then crust over. They last about 7-10 days.

What causes fever blisters?

Fever blisters result from a herpes simplex virus which becomes active. This virus is latent (dormant) in afflicted people, but can be activated by conditions such as stress, fever, trauma, hormonal changes, and exposure to sunlight. When lesions reappear, they tend to form in the same location.

Can fever blisters be spread?

Yes, the time from blister rupture until the sore is completely healed is the time of greatest risk for spread of infection. The virus can spread to your own eyes and genitalia, as well as to other people.

What is the treatment for fever blisters?

Treatment consists of coating the lesions with a protective barrier ointment containing an antiviral agent, for example 5% acyclovir ointment. Presently, there is no cure, but there is much research activity underway in this field. Contact your doctor or dentist for the latest information.

Prevention Tips

- ❑ Avoid mucous membrane contact when a lesion is present
- ❑ Do not squeeze, pinch or pick at the blister
- ❑ Wash hands carefully before touching your eyes or genital area, or another person
- ❑ Despite all caution, it is important to remember that it is possible to transmit herpes virus even when no blisters are present.

Additional Information

- American Academy of Otolaryngology - <http://www.entnet.org/>
- Medline Plus - Cold Sores (Interactive Tutorial) -
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/coldsores/htm/index.htm>

*Source: American Academy of Otolaryngology
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