

Herpes Simplex Virus

HSV-1, HSV-2

Herpes Simplex Virus is a risk group 2 virus. It is considered a **reproductive pathogen** as it is transmitted sexually and neonatally at various times: intrauterine (5% of cases), peripartum (85% of cases), and postpartum (10% of cases). Neonatal herpes is an extremely severe disease with a very high mortality rate. Neurological complications may occur in infants who survive the infection

How can I be exposed to HSV?

- Exposure occurs via direct contact with infected secretions (saliva, cervix, urethra), sexual transmission, exposure of infectious materials to mucous membranes, and parenteral inoculation
- Laboratorians may be exposed via mucous membranes, ingestion, inhalation of concentrated aerosolized materials, and parenteral inoculation.
- Transmission can occur from mother to child during pregnancy or birth.

How can I protect myself from exposure?

- Avoid inhalation, ingestion, and droplet exposure to mucous membranes by wearing eye/face protection and using primary containment devices.
- Avoid parenteral inoculation by strictly limiting the use of sharps and using sharps engineering controls whenever possible and taking precautions when working with animals.
- Avoid exposure to broken skin by wearing lab coat, gloves and waterproof bandages or avoiding agent until healed.

What should I do if I think I've been exposed to HSV?

Wash the affected area immediately for 15 minutes with soap and water and seek medical attention.

How long does it take for symptoms to develop?

Symptoms develop on average 4 days after exposure but can range from 1-26 days.

Is there a treatment or vaccine?

There is no vaccine for HSV, however treatment includes various antivirals.

What symptoms should I look for after a potential exposure?

HSV-1 is mainly associated with “above the waist” symptoms. These typically include cold sores and gingivostomatitis. and HSV-2 is mainly associated with “below the waist” symptoms, which include genital ulcers. Infections may also occur within the eyes, causing conjunctivitis, or on the nail or finger area in the form of vesicular lesions. Serious neurological symptoms occur in infections of the central nervous system (CNS).

Can I transmit it to other people?

Yes, transmission occurs through direct contact with infected secretions or mucous membrane/skin with lesions.

Can I transmit it to my pets?

No, each HSV strain causes disease in its own natural host species.

Can it survive on surfaces?

HSV can survive for short periods of time outside the host. It can survive on dry, inanimate surfaces for a few hours, up to 8 weeks and survives longer at lower humidity. HSV is easily inactivated by lipid solvents.

See *Pathogen Safety Data Sheet* for More Information

