

Cold Sores

Cold sores are a very common illness caused by the virus, Herpes Simplex Type I. Viruses cannot be cured.

The virus lives dormant in nerve cells. Cold sores may appear after colds, fever, exposure to sun, after stressful times, or for women, during menstruation.

Symptoms

- Small painful fluid filled blister
- Pain or tingling may precede the blister by 1-2 days
- Last 7-10 days

Treatment

Cold sores usually heal by themselves within a week.

In some cases a MD may prescribe medication especially if there is underlying evidence of other infection or if the initial outbreak is severe.

Self Care

- Over-the-counter cream such as Blistex, Carmex, Abreva can provide comfort
- Pain reliever such as aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen as directed
- Ice or warm compress may be applied to the blister to ease pain
- Allow to heal –avoid squeezing, pinching or picking at the blister. Keep your hands away from the area.
- Lysine, an amino acid, has been reported to aid in the prevention of blister outbreaks due to environmental triggers. If Lysine is taken, use only when a cold sore is coming on with a daily dosage of 1000 milligrams or less.

It is important to:

- Wash hands frequently
- Avoid triggers (prolonged sun exposure, stress, illness)
- Use sunscreen on lips or lip balm with SPF protection

Things to **AVOID** when tingling /burning or blister is present:

- Kissing and skin contact
- Sharing items (utensils, cups, food, towels, lip balm etc.)
- Oral sex

See a health care professional if sores last more than 2 weeks or if you have frequent outbreaks.

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