

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

"I have learned you can be careful and still get things. You can have something and have no symptoms at all."

"Herpes has helped me become a better partner, particularly with communication around sex and respect for my own and others' health. It's not always easy but it can also foster stronger relationships by having tough and real conversations early on."

"I never realized how common it was. Almost every time I tell somebody, they say that they know somebody else (or multiple others) in the same or similar boat. The stigma truly does add so much unnecessary stress."

"Herpes is a thing that happens to humans. And not a certain type of human - just humans (well, and animals but that's for another pamphlet)."

"Having a community of peers in the same situation has helped tremendously. Sometimes, it helps to just be heard and be in the presence of others who get it."

WE'RE LIVING WITH IT

TO HEAR MORE FROM PEOPLE MANAGING HSV:

- Ella Dawson's [TedTalk](#) on Youtube
- Devin tells live stories about her experiences on [The Moth](#)
- Courtney interviews people who are positive on his podcast [Something Positive for Positive People](#)
- Subscribe to [LaureenHD's Youtube Channel](#) to learn about all things herpes & sexual health.

GET SUPPORT

JOIN A COMMUNITY

- Love Profound, Virtual (on Meetup)
- @hsvinthecity
- @herpescouldnever
- @positive_results_community

TALK TO SOMEONE

If you'd like a one-time call with someone who has been positive for 5+ years, Love Profound offers donation-based one-on-one calls. Sign up using the QR code.

GET A BUDDY

If you're interested in staying in more consistent communication with someone who is also positive, Love Profound can match you up with a peer for support and you can communicate on your agreed upon terms.

ABOUT LOVE PROFOUND



Love Profound (LP) is a group dedicated to creating space for support, education, and transformation. We host monthly virtual support groups where members of all backgrounds get together to talk, cry, laugh and curse as they process through their positive herpes status. LP was founded by Devin Elise Wilson in NYC in 2017 out of a desire to find those other "1 in 6" people. We're stronger together than we are apart.

This pamphlet was written & designed by Devin Elise Wilson & has been approved by Dr. Barry Margulies, Professor of Molecular Virology; Terri Warren, ANP; The Black OBGYN Project; & Jessica Weems, PharmD

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DO YOU TEST POSITIVE FOR HERPES?



Laureen @laureenhd



Devin @lovealwaysdev



Courtney @courtneybrame_



Amber @ambersprattjones



Bek @bekantonucci

SO DO WE.



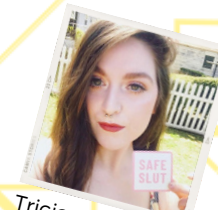
Shana @shanasingleton



Rich @askingforafriend.us



Christopher @pickeringfitness



Tricia @safe.slut



Belize @coachbelize

STI POSITIVE, SHAME NEGATIVE

Everyone pictured tests positive for genital HSV-1 or HSV-2

ALL ABOUT HERPES

Herpes *aka* genital herpes *aka* Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) *aka* HSV-1 (*aka* cold sores) or HSV-2



FAQS

▶ HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?

You may have contracted herpes from a partner who was asymptomatic or had never specifically been tested for herpes. Asymptomatic viral shedding can happen at any time. You or your partner may also have had symptoms but not known they were herpes.

▶ HOW LONG DO OUTBREAKS LAST?

Typically, the first herpes outbreak is the most severe in length and symptoms. Subsequent outbreaks can last anywhere from a few days to a couple weeks. This varies from person to person.

▶ HOW LONG UNTIL I CAN HAVE SEX AFTER AN OUTBREAK?

Even after an outbreak has healed, there is still a risk of passing HSV so talk to your partner about how comfortable you both feel when engaging sexually, outbreak or not.

▶ HOW DO I TELL A POTENTIAL NEW PARTNER ABOUT MY STATUS?

It's important to have open conversations with partners about sexual health before engaging sexually so you can each make the best decisions for yourselves, whether you test positive for STIs or not. There's no one right way to divulge this information - try new ways until you find what works best for you. For example, try asking them when they were last tested then share when you were and your results. If you've just found out and you're feeling uneasy about contacting past partners, there's a service that will let you do so anonymously - tellyourpartner.org.

▶ WHAT DOES THIS MEAN ABOUT ME?

Herpes is not a moral judgment. It doesn't care how many partners you've had. It's a virus that needs a warm body in order to survive - it just happened to choose yours. The herpes stigma exists because of our culture's inability to view sex objectively. In short - it doesn't mean anything about you.

THE BASICS

HSV causes a viral infection that is contracted through mucosal surfaces (for example mouth or genital tissues) or microabrasions in the skin, and that lives in the nerves.

HSV-1 typically causes oral herpes (cold sores), and HSV-2 typically causes genital herpes, but both types can cause an infection in either location (though oral HSV-2 is not as common).

Signs and symptoms may include flu-like symptoms, itching, pain, burning, cuts, bumps, blisters, and nerve tingling.

There is no way to completely prevent yourself or partner(s) from contracting genital herpes (outside of abstinence). STIs are a part of the risk we take with being sexually active.

Herpes is not yet curable but it is manageable.

CARING FOR YOUR BODY & MIND

Herpes outbreaks can be caused or exacerbated by stress. Here are some ways to take care:

- **Exercise regularly**
 - Try to move your body 30 minutes a day - good news, this is beneficial for your overall being.
- **Diet**
 - Try to have a well-balanced diet. Learn what works best for your body over time.
 - Foods high in lysine or lysine supplements are said to help manage outbreaks, though no in-depth studies have been done.
- **Medications**
 - Antivirals - Valacyclovir/Valtrex, Zovirax/Acyclovir, Famvir/Famciclovir
 - These can help to treat symptoms; lower the chances of having an outbreak; and lower the chances of passing the virus to a partner.
 - Some people choose to take these antivirals daily. Some take them only when they have an outbreak. And some take them only before anticipating sex (begin meds 5 days before). Talk to your clinician to find out what's right for you.
- **Therapy**
 - It can help to talk with someone who can remain objective. Find a therapist using PsychologyToday.com.
 - Melissa King, based in NYC, specializes in coping with genital herpes diagnoses.

DID YOU KNOW...

- Herpes, chicken pox, and shingles are caused by viruses in the same general family.
- Many people with HSV-2 don't know they have it because it can be asymptomatic (showing no signs or symptoms).
- Herpes isn't always protected against by condoms.
- Herpes isn't always included in a sexual health panel. Ask your clinician specifically to include herpes. If they refuse, tell them you've recently been exposed.
- The herpes test isn't always covered by insurance. Call your insurance before getting tested if you're worried about the cost, or visit a clinic.
- Herpes isn't solely an STI - oral HSV-1 (the causative agent of cold sores) is easily spread through kissing.
- An oral herpes infection can be transmitted to a genital one and vice versa via oral sex.

REMEMBER...

You are not alone. Herpes is very common - it's typically cited that between 60-80% test positive for HSV-1 while 1 in 6 test positive for HSV-2 - it's just not commonly talked about openly.

Herpes does not equal unworthy. It does not equal rejection. People who test positive for herpes date, and have casual and/or committed sexual relationships just like anyone else. Your pleasure still matters.

There are so many resources online about managing the different aspects (physical, mental, relational) of herpes - when in doubt, Google it out.

You've got this (pun intended).