



Dear Doctors,

I get cold sores all the time and my doctor says I have a herpes infection. What can I take to stop the cold sores as they are embarrassing?

J. in PSL

Dear J,

I have not seen your condition, but it is always good to get tested to see if you actually have herpes simplex 1 or 2. I have seen people who think they have herpes when they really have angular cheilitis which manifests as cracks or red splits in the corner of your mouth, but I am sure your doctor got it right if he observed your cold sores. Herpes simplex virus is transmitted viral infection that comes in two forms. The first is called Type 1 and it is mainly found on the trigeminal nerve of the face which innervates the mouth while Type 2 is found on the sacral ganglia which provides sensation to the pelvis and legs. The Center for Disease Control conservatively estimates that 45 million people in this country have a form of the herpes virus. It is transmittable through contact from one person to another. There is no therapy to rid the body of these viruses, but there are strategies to minimize the occurrence of outbreaks. On the pharmaceutical side there are antivirals which block your DNA from being taken over by the virus. They have some side effects and are contraindicated with certain pharmaceuticals, but their main drawback is cost. Antiviral therapy can cost over \$1600 dollars per year. You need a prescription for antiviral therapy so you need to consult your physician for this. There are natural therapies which also can minimize herpes outbreaks and be good for your overall health as well. Aloe vera gel has only one study done on it, but it has been favored by many for treating cold sores. Lemon Balm which is also called *Melissa officinalis* has been used successfully in Europe for controlling cold sores. It can be taken orally and applied topically as well. Silver "Sol" solution which replaced colloidal silver has also been found effective in minimizing recurrent outbreaks when applied to a cold sore site during the "prodromal" stage of an outbreak. The prodromal stage is usually the first signal you get that an outbreak is coming. It involves tingling or itching at the site and it means that a cold sore is coming on. The silver solution is very antiviral and when left on the skin it can kill the virus in 10 minutes. It needs to be reapplied 2-3 times a day. In my practice I give people a spray bottle of silver solution to use. Chinese herb formulas are also very good for herpes. In Traditional Chinese Medicine herpes is considered an invasion of damp heat and the formulas given can help reduce healing time. Diet can also help prevent outbreaks, Herpes virus seems to be dependent on the amino acid arginine for taking over a healthy cells DNA. Our body makes 80% of the arginine it needs to function and the other 20% comes from diet. The problems seem to occur when we consume foods which have so much arginine that we exceed the 20% our body needs. Foods which are high in arginine are chocolate, beer, meats, nuts, sesame and other seeds, onions, garlic, grapes, peanut butter, coconut grape juice, orange juice, grain cereals, and beans. Nuts seem to be the worst offender of the group. I have

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posted a list of foods and their arginine content on my website. I professionally think that there is more to the diet story than just arginine content. It has been found that lysine, another amino acid, counteracts arginine. This is the rationale behind people taking lysine supplementation to minimize herpes outbreaks, but in my clinical experience I have seen mixed results with lysine supplementation. People who go on a diet rich in vegetables and fruit and with moderate protein intake seem to do better than people who just take lysine. This is probably because there is another factor in herpes and that is the amount of inflammation in your body also affects the rate of occurrence of outbreaks, hence the more inflammation, the more outbreaks. Fruits and vegetables have more omega-3 fat in them and omega-3 fat reduces inflammation in the body. Nuts on the other hand have much more omega-6 oil in them and that encourages neurogenic inflammation on the nerve roots where the herpes virus resides. Red meat has a fat called arachidonic acid which causes more inflammation in the body.

The last factor in reducing herpes is reducing stress in the body. Stress can come from too much sun which is easy to control, but the stress from obstacles in our lives is much harder to get control of. This is where yoga, meditation and spiritual awareness come in. Learning different ways to handle anger, anxiety, fear, grief and depression can not only reduce outbreaks, but can also improve your relationships with others. Keeping stress inside your body can trigger the virus as well. In my office I help reduce stress through acupuncture and herbal formulas to get people started and then if they are interested, I help them find resources that fit their level of preference to reduce their stress. Hope that helps!

Yours in Health,
Dr. Frank Ervolino

Dr. Ervolino is a Naturopathic Doctor and an Acupuncture Physician. He received both of his degrees from Bastyr University (www.bastyr.edu). He is presently on staff as an acupuncturist at Jupiter Medical Center and practices at Palm Beach Holistic Center in Jupiter, Florida. You can forward questions to Dr. Ervolino at herbal_doc@hotmail.com

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