

Cold Sores

Cold sores- also called fever blisters- are contagious lesions caused by a virus and usually they appear on the lips.

What triggers cold sores?

Fever, cold, menstruation, stress and sun exposure.

How do I get cold sores?

From direct contact with another person who has an active lesion, by sharing eating objects, razors and towels.

How do I know it's a cold sore?

If you have the following then it must be a cold sore:

- Small, painful, fluid-filled blisters on a raised, red, painful area of your skin
- Pain or tingling, called the prodrome, often precedes the blisters by one to two days
- Usual duration of seven to 10 days.

When should I seek medical help?

- If you have a pre-existing health condition that has compromised your immune system
- If the cold sores don't heal within one to two weeks on their own
- If the symptoms are severe
- If you have frequent recurrences of cold

sores

- If you experience irritation in your eyes

How can I prevent them??

- Avoid kissing and skin contact with people while blisters are present. The virus can spread easily as long as there are moist secretions from your blisters. In persons with depressed immune systems, the virus can be spread even after the skin appears to be healed.
- Avoid sharing items. Utensils, towels and other items can spread the virus when blisters are present.
- Keep your hands clean. Wash your hands carefully before touching another person when you have a cold sore.
- Be careful about touching other parts of your body. Your eyes and genital area may be particularly susceptible to the spread of the virus.
- Avoid triggers. If possible try to avoid or prevent conditions that stress your body, such as getting a cold or the flu, not getting enough sleep or staying in the sun for long periods of time without applying sunblock.
- Use sunblock. Apply sunblock to your lips and face before prolonged exposure to the sun — during both winter and summer — to help prevent cold sores.

How shall I take care of them??

- Use creams and moisturizers.
- Take an OTC pain reliever.
- Use cold or heat. Try applying ice or warm compresses to the blisters to ease the pain.
- Let it heal. Avoid squeezing, pinching or picking at any blister.