

This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,
Worcestershire Health and Care Trust,
2 Kings Court, Charles Hasting Way,
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or by email 📧:

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Worcestershire
Health and Care
NHS Trust



HERPES SIMPLEX

(COLD SORES)

What is it?

Your questions answered

**An Information Leaflet
for
Patients and Staff**

WHAT ARE THEY?

Cold sores are caused by a type of herpes virus.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The first symptom is often of tingling in the area (usually the mouth or nose) where a blister will appear. This blister will then develop a crust and will heal without scarring. Children who get their first attack can have more widespread blisters and may also have mouth ulcers and fever which makes them feel rather miserable. These blisters and ulcers will also heal without scarring and if the child has any further attacks they will simply take the form of a cold sore.

WHY DO COLD SORES RECUR?

Following infection the cold sore virus does not completely disappear from the body but remains in an inactive state. Re-activation of the virus and repeat cold sores can be triggered by factors such as sunlight, cold, stress and illness.

WHAT IS THE INCUBATION PERIOD?

The time taken from contact with the germ until the cold sore starts to appear is usually between 2 and 12 days.

ARE THEY INFECTIOUS?

Yes. They are usually spread by kissing (because the virus is active in the cold sore blister and can be transferred on to another person's skin during a kiss). People who know they have an active cold sore should avoid kissing young children. The virus can also be picked up on hands, if the sores are touched, and passed on to others. Hands must therefore be thoroughly washed after touching the sores.

IS THERE ANY TREATMENT?

Most cold sores do not need any treatment at all and will heal up quickly on their own. Anaesthetic cream, soothing lotions (e.g. calamine) and antiviral ointments can be helpful. Some people have frequent recurrences and may receive tablets from their GP to prevent these.

HOW SOON CAN THE PERSON RETURN TO WORK/THE CARE SETTING?

Most people will not need to be excluded at all.

