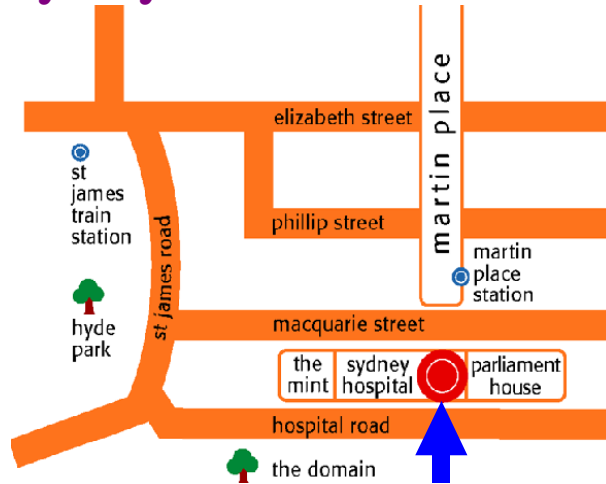


## Sydney Sexual Health Centre



The Sydney Sexual Health Centre provides a free, confidential and comprehensive service that helps put you in control of your sexual health. The service supports your sexual health by providing screening, vaccination and management of sexually transmissible infections including HIV and hepatitis B, women's and men's sexual health care, education, individual and couple counselling, and needle and syringe exchange. The service offers a choice of male and female doctors, nurses and counsellors who are respectful of your lifestyle and sexuality.

### NO MEDICARE CARD REQUIRED

#### Opening hours

Please Visit to our web site

#### Web Address:

<http://www.sshc.org.au/>

**Telephone Number:** 02 93827440

**Sexual Health Info line:** 1800 451624

## NSW/ACT Sexual Health Services

### Free & confidential sexual health care

Albury	Ph: (02) 6058 1840
Armidale	Ph: (02) 6776 4738
Bourke	Ph: (02) 6872 2145
Broken Hill	Ph: (08) 8080 1556
Canberra	Ph: (02) 6244 2184
Coffs Harbour	Ph: (02) 6656 7865
Dareton	Ph: (03) 5021 7200
Dubbo	Ph: (02) 6885 1700
Forster	Ph: (02) 6555 6822
Gosford	Ph: (02) 4320 2114
Goulburn	Ph: (02) 4827 3913
Griffith	Ph: (02) 6966 9900
Katoomba	Ph: (02) 4784 6560
Kings Cross	Ph: (02) 9360 2766
Kogarah	Ph: (02) 9350 2742
Lightning Ridge	Ph: (02) 6829 1022
Lismore	Ph: (02) 6620 2980
Liverpool	Ph: (02) 9827 8022
Manly	Ph: (02) 9977 3288
Marrickville	Ph: (02) 9560 3057
Mt Druitt	Ph: (02) 9881 1733
Newcastle	Ph: (02) 4923 6909
Nowra	Ph: (02) 4423 9353
Orange	Ph: (02) 6392 8600
Parramatta	Ph: (02) 9843 3124
Penrith	Ph: (02) 4734 2507
Port Kembla	Ph: (02) 4276 2399
Queanbeyan	Ph: (02) 6298 9233
Richmond	Ph: (02) 4578 1622
St Leonards	Ph: (02) 9926 7414
Sydney City	Ph: (02) 9382 7440
Tamworth	Ph: (02) 6766 3095
Taree	Ph: (02) 6592 9421
Wagga Wagga	Ph: (02) 6938 6492

English  
[SSH-7430]

want to know  
more about

**GENITAL  
HERPES**

SSHC SYDNEY  
SEXUAL  
HEALTH  
CENTRE

## What is Genital Herpes?

The Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) causes herpes, one of the most common infections in humans. There are two types of HSV and both can occur in either area.

- Type 1 is usually found around the lips and is commonly known as a cold sore.
- Type 2 is usually found around the genital or anal areas.

Once a person has HSV, it travels along the nerves that are connected to the affected area and lies dormant. The virus can re-activate later and travel along the nerve to the skin surface and cause a recurrence.

### How do I know if I have herpes?

The first episode of genital herpes can cause a severe illness lasting several weeks without treatment. However, the severity is extremely variable and in some people the symptoms are very mild. Recurrent episodes are usually less severe and of shorter duration.

HSV may cause fluid-filled blisters (vesicles) appearing on or near the genitals. The blisters burst to form tender sores that eventually heal. The healing process is often associated with itching.

Some people may get a variety of symptoms before a recurrence. These may include tingling, nerve pain, and itching, a few hours to a few days before a recurrence occurs. This is called a prodrome. The time from a prodrome to complete healing of the recurrence is approximately 6-7 days.

### How does someone get infected?

HSV is transmitted by close skin contact with someone who has the infection. This usually occurs during vaginal, anal or oral sex. However, transmission can also occur if there is skin-to-skin contact *without* penetrative sex. Transmission occurring from individuals with obvious symptoms is well documented, but many people are unaware they are infected with HSV because they have no symptoms, or very minor ones that may go unnoticed.

## How long does it take for symptoms to develop?

The first episode usually takes 2-20 days to occur after infection, but occasionally symptoms may not occur until months or years later.

### How often does herpes recur?

Recurrent episodes occur in most, but not all people and can happen years after the first episode. The interval between episodes varies greatly between individuals. Genital infection with HSV-1 is less likely to recur as often as genital infection with HSV-2. The same is true for HSV-2 around the mouth.

### Why do recurrent episodes occur?

Recurrences occur when the virus inside the nerve cell is re-activated. For many people there does not seem to be a pattern to their recurrences while others notice that recurrences occur when they are pre-menstrual, tired, stressed, sunburnt, or consume excessive alcohol or other drugs.

## Does HSV infection affect the ability to have children?

HSV is not transmitted by sperm, nor does it affect fertility. Recurrent episodes during a pregnancy very rarely affect the baby in the uterus, however, a first episode during pregnancy could be serious and immediate medical attention is required. Women should advise their obstetrician or midwife that they have had genital herpes just in case a recurrence is experienced at the time of childbirth. In this case she may be advised to have a caesarean section to avoid transmission of herpes to the baby.

### Is there any treatment for herpes?

For people having herpes for the first time or those who have frequent or more severe outbreaks, there are tablets, which may be appropriate. Taken continuously, the medication greatly reduces the number of recurrences someone may experience.

Medication taken with each recurrence can shorten the time it takes for symptoms to resolve. These medications are usually well tolerated but do not 'cure' herpes. For more information speak to your local doctor or local sexual health clinic.

## What advice should be given to people when they have a recurrence?

- All people who suspect they are having their first episode of HSV should seek immediate medical attention. It is important the diagnosis is confirmed.
- Keep the area clean and dry. Bath the area in salty water and dry thoroughly once or twice a day.
- Aspirin or paracetamol may also help with pain.
- Adjusting to herpes can be difficult at first. Discussing it with a counsellor, friend or partner may help you adjust.
- Condoms should be used as they reduce the risk of transmission of herpes. Condoms do not remove the risk entirely as the condom may not cover the infected part or may not remain in place for the duration of sexual activity.
- If you have recurrent genital herpes you may 'shed' the virus between episodes and therefore using condoms reduces the risk of transmission.
- It is advisable to avoid sexual contact during herpes recurrences from the time of prodromal symptoms (burning, tingling, itching, sensation at or near the affected area) until the sores have completely healed.
- Condoms should always be used with new or casual partners.

## How can someone reduce the number of recurrences?

Some people with herpes can identify trigger factors for recurrences. These are factors that may trigger an episode. If you can identify a factor that triggers your herpes recurrences then you can reduce or avoid these in an attempt to stop recurrences. If this process is not successful, you can discuss management options with a doctor or local sexual health service.