

GENITAL HERPES – KEY TAKE HOME POINTS

- Genital herpes is a common infection. As many as one in five adults in New Zealand have genital herpes due to HSV-2. Up to 50% of genital herpes is due to HSV-1.
- Genital herpes is under-recognised and under-treated. Minor lesions are common; any recurring localised anogenital symptoms or lesions strongly suggest HSV infection.
- Laboratory confirmation of the diagnosis and typing is important, but should not delay treatment.
- Oral antiviral treatment is safe, effective and generic brands are very cheap.
- Oral antiviral treatment of the first clinical episode should always be offered regardless of the time of symptom onset. Do not confuse the treatment of first episode genital herpes with the '72 hour' herpes zoster rule.
- Antiviral therapy of recurrent genital herpes may be suppressive or episodic. Many patients prefer suppressive antiviral therapy. It is particularly recommended for those with frequent and/or severe recurrences or associated psychosocial morbidity. For those choosing episodic antiviral therapy, it is more effective when patients start therapy themselves at the first signs of a recurrence. This needs anticipatory advice on prescribing.
- Neonatal HSV infection is a rare but potentially fatal disease of babies, occurring within the first 4-6 weeks of life. Symptoms are non-specific and a high index of suspicion is required. Most neonatal HSV infections are acquired at birth, generally from mothers with an unrecognised first genital herpes infection acquired during pregnancy.
- Specialist advice on management should be sought for a woman with a history of genital herpes and active lesions at term and especially in the high risk situation of a first episode up to 6 weeks prior to delivery.
- A diagnosis of genital herpes can have a profound effect.
Patients tell us they want –
 - To be given accurate up-to-date information
 - To be provided with the best treatment available
 - To be involved in decisions about treatment and management
 - To be referred for specialist care or advice when appropriate

The NZHF has a range of resources to assist patients and clinicians.

Phone: Herpes Helpline toll free **0508 11 12 13**

Website: **www.herpes.org.nz**