



Herpes (cold sores)

Herpes simplex is a viral infection that may cause sores in the mouth or on the lips and face. The sores are commonly called cold sores.

If you think your child has cold sores:

- Tell your childcare provider or call the school.
- **Keep your child home from childcare** if they have a **first infection** and are drooling. Your child can return when the sores in the mouth have healed.
- Your child does not need to stay home if they have a recurring infection.
- School age children do not need to stay home.
- For more information, call Hennepin County Epidemiology at 612-543-5230 or your local health department.

Parent/Guardian information

Symptoms

The first time a child is infected there may be blister-like sores inside the mouth and on the gums. Your child may have a fever and be fussy. Cold sores may occur many times in a person's life (recurrent infection).

If your child is infected for the first time, it may take 2 to 14 days for symptoms to start.

Spread

- By having direct contact with saliva, commonly by kissing.
- By touching fluid from the blisters or sores.

Contagious period

First infection: up to 2 weeks, sometimes longer.

Recurring infection: Usually 3 to 4 days.

Call your health care provider

- If blisters are near your child's eyes.
- If your child has a seizure or fever and a severe headache during a cold sore outbreak.
- If the blisters have not healed within 10 days.

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- If the blisters become reddened, swollen, or hot to the touch.
- If your child gets frequent cold sores.

Prevention

- Remind children not to touch the sores.
- Wash hands after touching anything that could be contaminated with secretions from the mouth or the sores. Your child may need help with hand washing.
- Clean and disinfect objects that come in contact with the sores or secretions from the mouth. Use a product that kills germs.
- Do not kiss a person with sores on or near the mouth.
- Wear disposable medical gloves when touching the sores and use a cotton-tipped swab to apply medication. Dispose of gloves after use.

