

## ***Herpes; Nothing to Be Ashamed Of***

Herpes is the broad common name for a number of virus species, seven to be exact. One of the most common strains is called *herpes simplex virus*. There are actually two strains of this virus: herpes simplex 1 and herpes simplex 2, more commonly written as HSV1 and HSV2. The primary difference is that HSV1 infections typically manifest as cold sores or fever blisters on various parts of the mouth, throat, and face, as well as the central nervous system. HSV2 more commonly creates these same blisters, but in the anogenital area.

Though it is often considered a contemporary virus, herpes infection dates all the way back to Ancient Greece where the name “herpes” comes from. Herpes in Ancient Greek literally means “creeping” referring to the way the blisters come and go, and don’t develop on a newly infected person for up to three weeks later. In Rome, Emperor Tiberius placed a temporary ban on kissing to prevent the continued spread of these creeping sores. Despite such a long history, it wasn’t discovered to be a virus until the 1940s.

Even once it was discovered to be a virus, and thus major breakthroughs in treatment could occur, it was not a priority to develop such treatments because despite the fact that there are so many carriers of the virus, the majority of them are asymptomatic. Only a fraction of carriers have frequent outbreaks, meaning more than six a year. The reason for this is that once a person has been infected, they may develop initial blisters, but then they subside and remain dormant within a cluster of nerve cells called a *ganglion*. There it remains silently waiting for its opportunity to resurface. There are a number of triggers that can cause the virus to create blisters, though some people are more sensitive to some more than others. Excessive sun exposure, allergies, skin abrasion, fever, stress, sugar, poor sleep, citrus fruits and juices,

and even menstruation can all precipitate herpetic blisters.

As an interesting aside, herpes was not always associated with stigmatization. Back in the 1970s, cold sores were just infrequent lip blisters and few people had ever heard of genital herpes. During the development process of the anti-viral herpes medication acyclovir, Dr. Pedro Cuatrecasas of UC San Diego, who was involved in the drug’s development, said that the marketing associates of the firm raised the issue that there was “no market” for the medication. In order to create demand for the medication, the connection between the oral blister and the genital infection would have to be emphasized.

It was then coordinated through various media outlets such as Reader’s Digest, U.S. News, and ultimately culminating in the Time Magazine cover article, Herpes: The New Scarlet Letter in 1982 which permanently demonized the infected individual in the eyes of the general public. The articles used fear-invoking language like “outbreaks” and “attacks” to generate demand for the medication that could help people manage this new life-altering disease. This type of marketing process has since then come to be known as “disease mongering”.

Before 1980, it was nearly impossible to find a therapy group for herpes sufferers, or victims of psychological anguish due to the shame of being a herpes carrier. This fear culture surrounding the herpes virus is almost entirely manufactured by manufactures of the drug who needed a market to sell to. The real truth is that the majority of people who carry the herpes virus lead perfectly normal lives and are typically asymptomatic .

There are some individuals, however, who have frequent outbreaks and have resorted to the continuous use of antiviral medication, primarily acyclovir, in order to suppress outbreaks. While it may be effective in reducing outbreaks for many

people, there is a significant risk of side effects that include hepatitis and renal failure. Having to choose between renal failure and herpes outbreaks is the type of choice no one should have to make. Thankfully, there are a number of natural approaches people can resort to reduce outbreaks, but it requires more sophisticated knowledge of HSV and its mechanisms.

One of the key nutrients that HSV requires in order to replicate is *Arginine*. Arginine is a very common amino acid that is easily synthesized by the body and is abundant in many foods in the common diet. Unfortunately for people with slightly weaker immune systems or high allergy sensitivity to certain arginine-rich foods, consuming a lot of arginine can translate into frequent outbreaks. Arginine abundant foods are dairy products, seafood, most nuts and certain seeds as well as soy products.

One method to reduce the occurrence of outbreaks is by reducing the arginine consumption and increasing the consumption and supplementation of *lysine*. Lysine and arginine use the same absorption pathways in the body, as well as promotes the excretion of arginine. When the lysine/arginine is significantly tipped in lysine's favor, the HSV has a more difficult time reproducing and therefore is impeded from developing into an outbreak.

An analysis of several studies shows that restricting arginine intake and taking high doses of lysine supplements significantly reduces outbreak occurrences. Outbreaks that do occur are less severe and of shorter duration. The mean effective dosage was between 500 - 3,000 mg per day. Dosages up to 6,000 mg per day are known to be safe.

Another supplement that has been shown to provide relief is zinc. Zinc, used both orally and topically has been shown to help reduce the occurrence of outbreaks,

as well as provided relief during outbreaks, and reduce healing time.

One study conducted on two hundred patients by EF Finnerty used a 0.25% zinc solution that was applied 8-10 times per day starting within 24 hours after an outbreak occurred. Once topical applications were applied, the majority of the immediate symptoms, including stinging and itching stopped within 2-3 hours. The lesions typically disappeared within 3-6 days. Some of the women in the study used the zinc solution as a vaginal douche for genital herpes and reported excellent results.

Another topical treatment alternative that has been effective for a number of people is lemon balm, specifically *melissa officinalis*. It's most effective if applied very early, in the beginning stages of outbreak.

Some other nutrients that have a significant effect on reducing the severity of outbreaks as well as decreasing healing times and reducing pain symptoms are vitamins C and E. Vitamin C, since the days of Linus Paulings famous experiments with cancer and terminal illness have demonstrated vitamin C's incredible ability to improve the immune systems capabilities, particularly when it comes to viral infections. HSV both in vitro and en vivo is inhibited by vitamin C. There have been several studies on vitamin C, especially formulas that have been buffered and esterified with flavonoids, which are nutrient in plants that have been shown to have numerous health promoting properties including immune system enhancement. The effectiveness of these formulas against HSV outbreaks are more effective at reducing symptoms at higher dosages, specifically in the range of 5,000 to 10,000 mg, though, each person's bowel threshold for vitamin C supplementation is different and one should only take vitamin C up to the point that they incur runny bowels and then ease back, though

buffered and esterified vitamin C may be more bowel friendly.

Vitamin E, used topically, has been shown to reduce the severity of outbreaks and reduce healing time significantly. Even though single applications are effective at reducing symptoms, multiple applications over the course of the outbreak are much more effective.

Though not a vitamin, or nutrient, there is another alternative option that has been gaining serious recognition for its ability to boost the power of the immune systems through T-cell and B-cell activation, is Red Marine Algae. Though the process by which it targets HSV has not been fully substantiated, there is a rapidly growing body of anecdotal evidence that suggests that red marine algae may be very effective at reducing the occurrence of outbreaks in a large number of individuals. There are currently no known adverse effects of consuming red marine algae and it is considered a food.

While most herpes therapies are typically designed to directly target the virus in the body, or alleviate symptoms of infection topically, there is another methodology that is more effective in certain individuals and can be complimentary to other treatments and that is by boosting the overall performance capability of the immune system. Though vitamin C does have this effect, mushroom extracts have a very good reputation for rapidly boosting immune system activity. Namely, reishi, shiitake, and maitake mushroom extracts boots the activity of key immune cells that seek out and destroy viruses and other harmful invaders. Another substance that works off of similar principles and can be effective for HSV is humic acid. Humic acid is one of the primary components of soil, peat, and coal. Who knew dirt could be life saving?

Though the mechanism of action against HSV is not fully understood, another treatment option exists, though it must be administered by a doctor. *Adenosine*

*Monophosphate* (AMP) intermediate metabolite in the synthesis of nucleic acids, and is often found to be in abnormally low quantities in people with HSV infections. Studies have shown, in both human and animal trials, that AMP significantly reduced the rate of outbreak recurrence as well as reduced severity of outbreaks. While AMP may be a viable option for many people, some people have experienced chest pain. This pain is not an indicator of any heart conditions, but it is a side effect and it should only be administered by a doctor.

Even though supplementation of certain nutrients can have a serious impact on the severity of an outbreak, or greatly reduce the frequency of outbreaks, the ultimate defense is paying close attention to your diet and learning to recognize your body's particular sensitivities. Everyone's body is unique, and this is equally true of our allergies and immune suppressing triggers. Taking care to avoid coffee, dairy, sugar, nuts, and foods you are allergic to can go a long way to improve your happiness by reducing outbreak frequency and is not to be underestimated.

As with all major changes to your diet and supplement regimen, it is important to consult with a qualified medical professional, who is familiar with your medical history, before making any major changes to either of these areas.



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