

Cold Sores, Fever Blisters, Canker Sores & What Foods to Avoid



What are cold sores?

Cold sores, also known as fever blisters, are small, fluid-filled blisters that crop up on or near the lips. They're usually caused by the herpes simplex virus. They can appear individually or in clusters.

How did my child get the virus?

The most common way to catch a cold sore is from a kiss. Other ways are by sharing a cup, spoon, or fork. The person who passes the virus to your child may not have a visible sore or any symptoms at all, but has the virus in his or her saliva. Most people get the herpes simplex virus sometime during childhood. During the first bout, called primary herpes, your child may have severe mouth soreness, gum inflammation, perhaps a fever, swollen lymph nodes, and a sore throat. These primary symptoms may be very severe or very mild. In fact, you may not even notice them. Your child will get better in about seven to ten days, but the virus will stay in his body for life. In some people, it lies dormant and never acts up. In others, it periodically flares up and the cold sores appear. These flare-ups are called secondary herpes. Stress, fever, and sun exposure, but not contact with a cold sore seems to trigger outbreaks. During these secondary flare-ups, your child probably won't have swelling of his gums or lymph nodes or a fever or sore throat, but he will have the telltale blistering on or near his lips.

Are cold sores ever dangerous?

Cold sores themselves aren't dangerous, but it's possible for the virus to spread to other parts of the body. When it spreads to the eyes, for example, it's called ocular herpes, which is a serious eye infection. If your child develops a sore on his eyelid or the surface of his eye, call his doctor right away. Your child may need antiviral drugs to keep the infection from scarring his cornea. In rare cases, ocular herpes can weaken vision and even cause blindness. Try to keep your child from touching his eyes when he has a cold sore. In fact to keep him from spreading the infection, have him wash his hands regularly and try to keep him from picking at the cold sore. You may want to put mittens or socks on his hands while he sleeps.

What's the best way to treat a cold sore?

A cold sore will go away on its own, but to ease any discomfort, apply ice to the sore. Or, if your doctor says its okay, give your child a mild pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. **Never give aspirin to your child!** It could trigger Reye's Syndrome, a rare, but life-threatening illness.

How can I prevent cold sores?

If you have a cold sore, you should avoid kissing your child until the cold sore goes away. Remember, one peck with an infected lip is all it takes to pass on the virus. You'll also want to avoid sharing cups and eating utensils while you have a cold sore. You'll want to protect your child from the sun as well, since exposure to sunlight can trigger an outbreak once a child has the virus. If you venture outside on a sunny day, put a brimmed hat on your child to protect him from the sun's rays. You can also put lip balm on him for protection.



What are canker sores?

Canker sores, also known as aphthous ulcers, are crater-like sores that usually appear individually on the tongue, gums, or on the inside of the cheeks. They are painful and make eating certain foods very uncomfortable. Canker sores usually go away by themselves in about two weeks without any treatment. There are numerous over the counter forms of canker sore relief products such as Orabase topical anesthesia that can help alleviate the discomfort. Canker sores are not contagious like cold sores and are not spread to other people. The exact cause of canker sores is unknown, but may be due to many reasons such as stress, allergies, or nutritional deficiencies.

What foods to avoid!

FOODS CONTAINING CITRIC ACID:

Citrus fruits & artificially flavored drinks such as Kool Aid
Carbonated water, ginger ale, club soda, Coke & Pepsi
Medications such as Alka Seltzer & Bromo Seltzer
Candy such as Life Savers, cough drops, & lollipops

FOODS CONTAINING ACETIC ACID:

Dressings such as those used in potato salad & cole slaw
Catsup, which also contains citric acid
Sauces: tartar sauce, hollandaise sauce, Worcestershire sauce, mustards, & all chili peppers and chili sauces
Pickled Foods: corned beef, relish, pickled cucumbers, pigs feet, baked beans, & sauerbraten