

# Fact Sheet: Herpes Gladiatorum

## What is Herpes?

Herpes gladiatorum (HG) is a viral infection caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). This is the same virus that causes cold sores. The first infection with HSV usually occurs before 5 years of age. Antibodies to HSV are found in 50-90% of adults. HG is often seen in athletes, but anyone can get it. Once someone is infected with HSV, they have it for life.

## What are the symptoms?

HG will usually start with sores or blisters on the head, trunk, arms or legs about 8 days after exposure, but may be longer. These crust and heal within a few days. Before the sores appear, some people have fever, sore throat, swollen glands, or tingling of the skin. Some people find that stress, illness, injuries, may cause the sores to return.

## How is HG diagnosed?

A diagnosis of HG is usually made by a doctor by the appearance of the sores.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or call Wayne County Public Health at 734-727-7078.*

## How is it spread?

HG is primarily spread through skin to skin contact with the infected person; however, it can be transmitted occasionally through sharing of moist washcloths and towels. Wash your hands after touching the sores. HSV can be transmitted to any area of the body, including the eyes. See a doctor immediately if you have sores in or around the eyes.

## How is it treated?

Herpes is a virus and cannot be treated with antibiotics. Your health care provider can prescribe anti-viral medications that may decrease the severity of the outbreaks.

## How is it prevented?

- Avoid skin-to-skin contact of the infected area with another person until the skin is completely healed.
- Wash hands thoroughly after touching the affected area.
- Don't share washcloths, towels or other personal items.
- For athletes, take a shower right after practice
- Don't share, soap, water bottles or towels.
- Practice and competition gear should be cleaned daily
- Athletes should report any skin lesions or sores to coaching staff.