Anal sex and herpes? [1]

Alice,

After reading your informative replies on Herpes, I was wondering if male to male anal sex can result in anal herpes? If so, what are the symptoms of having herpes in that area?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Bravo! Gathering information is the first step in prevention and is essential when protecting yourself and your partner. Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), particularly herpes, are very common. For more detailed information about Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV), take a look in the Go Ask Alice! archives [2] for additional questions and answers. In particular, check out What is herpes? [3].

Anal sex (as well as oral and vaginal sex) is another way to transmit the herpes virus from one person to another; however, one partner needs to have herpes in order to pass it on. The symptoms of anal herpes include pain, itching, and sores in your genital area, but many people who are infected show no outwardly visible signs. HSV can be spread via direct contact with these sores, for instance during anal sex, or through a break in the skin. HSV sores do not have to be present in order for it to spread.

If you come in contact with someone who has HSV, you may experience sores, blisters, and swelling not only in the genital areas, but also on the tongue, mouth, eyes, gums, lips, and fingers. Pain and itching is followed by small red bumps or tiny white blisters, which may cause pain and tenderness, particularly in the genital region. Other symptoms may appear flu-like, such as swollen glands, fever, chills, muscle aches, fatigue, and nausea. While the initial outbreak may last up to a month, recurring outbreaks are typically less severe, lasting three to seven days.

If you suspect you may have herpes, make an appointment with your primary care provider.

Alice!

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Sexual & Reproductive Health [4]
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