

Herpes Simplex Infection in Babies

What Is It?

HSV stands for Herpes Simplex Virus. In adults it can present as genital lesions, however rarely it can result in a serious infection in babies with the potential for long term damage.

How Does The Baby Get Infected?

Babies are most at risk of getting HSV if their mother has genital herpes for the first time in the last 6 weeks before birth. Babies are most commonly infected during delivery but can also be infected before they are born or soon after birth. These babies are seen by doctors and treated after birth.

There is a small chance (1-3%) of a baby becoming infected if their mother has a recurrent genital infection at the time of delivery. In very rare cases, women may not have noticed any recurrent symptoms. Therefore, any woman who has had a Genital Herpes infection at anytime in the past should be aware of the signs of possible infection in their baby.

What Are The Signs Of HSV Infection In A Baby?

Babies with HSV can present in a variety of different ways. You should seek urgent medical attention if your baby shows any of the problems listed below, particularly in the first 6 weeks following birth:

- Blisters (fluid filled spots) on the skin
- Irritability – not responding appropriately to cuddles or feeds
- Breathing problems
- Fits or seizures (abnormal movements)

Please give this leaflet to the nurse or doctor who reviews your baby to highlight the possible risk of herpes simplex infection.

If the doctor thinks your baby may have HSV, your baby will be started on intravenous antiviral treatment until the results of tests are known.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by Royal Devon staff undertaking procedures at the Royal Devon hospitals.

© Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Designed by Graphics (Print & Design), RD&E (Heavitree)