

## Fed Up With Recurring Cold Sores?

by: Kathryn Beach

Cold sores are caused by the herpes simplex virus, a common and infectious virus which is usually contacted during childhood and hides in the nerve ganglia near where your cold sore usually appears. The virus can remain dormant for months or years without reappearing, until your body becomes unbalanced.

Your natural body defenses keep the virus in check until your defenses drop because you may feel tired, upset or stressed; your resistance is lowered, you have a fever, overexposure to the sun or wind, or maybe you are menstruating, and suddenly you feel that familiar tingling sensation.

This is when the virus is moving down your nerve fibers to the skin surface. Now you feel the tingling, itching, perhaps burning or drying sensations, lasting a few hours or a few days, to be followed by redness and swelling at the cold sore site; the virus is reproducing.

Next is the appearance of clusters of small blisters that are painfully sensitive, followed by all the blisters joining to become one large open, weeping sore. This is the most painful and most contagious stage, although next is when it starts to crust over and heal. At this stage it is painful because any movement tends to crack the scab.

Once the scab forms, the sore is healing from the inside out. The virus is retreating, but there is continued itching and some pain and irritation. Once the scab is gone, usually redness remains for another 2 to 14 days. Contagion remains until the spot disappears entirely.

Conventional treatment of the virus includes creams and lotions that can relieve the pain and reduce secondary infections, but there is no cure for cold sores. Preventative measures seem more successful than curative in minimizing the number and severity of infections. Learn to recognize the situations that usually lead to you developing a cold sore and prevent them from occurring. Also recognize the first signs of the onset of a cold sore and apply immediate treatment. A medical practitioner can prescribe antiviral drugs that will minimize symptoms and re-infections.

Avoid contact with the sores; wash your hands immediately if you touch them, and don't share linens and towels with anyone else.

Naturopathic treatments of cold sores include applications of the amino acid lysine, which is particularly effective in preventing or reducing the occurrence of cold sores. A salve containing lysine makes an effective lip balm, as dry cracked lips seem to invite a cold sore. Vitamin and mineral supplements may help the body fight the herpes virus, especially vitamin C, E, B vitamins and zinc. A whole foods diet that excludes sugar and refined foods and includes plenty of fiber and alkali-producing foods also can help prevent herpes attacks.

Applying tea tree oil directly to the tingling area or cold sores with a cotton swab can

minimize an outbreak, reinfection and spreading. Throw away the swab immediately after using.

The advantages of using tea tree oil are:

- \* Decreasing pain and shortening the healing time of the herpes lesions.
- \* Helping to inhibit recurrences
- \* Assisting in prevention of viral activity by supporting the immune system

Using tea tree oil, avoiding the conditions that bring on herpes attacks, and supporting the immune system through proper diet and hygiene are the best methods for dealing with this annoying and painful virus.