

Herpes Disclosure Guide

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Disclosure Guide Overview AI PodCast:

This is an **AI generated podcast** that analyzes this document to make a comprehensive audio overview. Unfortunately I cannot upload audio alone so I made it into a video. <https://youtu.be/27Y0UOUwV34?si=Hv1JgRUHN0SFg1wP>

Why Should You Disclose?:

Conversations about sexual health is something that **EVERY** consenting partner should be having regardless of their STI / STD status. This conversation should include sexually transmitted diseases / viruses, kinks, what you are comfortable doing in bed and even birth control methods. These conversations are very important to prevent any discomfort, and to ensure all parties involved are having a good time. Sex is only fun if everyone involved is giving enthusiastic consent and does not feel pressured in the moment to try something new or be surprised by something sexually (whether it be a new toy, fetish, use of a condom, STI, etc.) If you are uncomfortable having these conversations you should rethink if you are ready to be having sex at all or rethink the partner you are having sex with.

Even though some doctors say that you do not have to disclose, being that herpes is so common and even though it is not illegal in most places, morally disclosing your herpes status is important. Informed consent is a very important principle for sexual partners. Informed consent is a clear and affirmative agreement between two or more people to engage in sexual activity. It's voluntary, meaning that no one feels pressured to participate. Characteristics of informed consent include:

- Mutual understanding: All parties involved understand what's happening and what's being agreed to
- Freely given: Consent is not coerced by force, threats, or intimidation
- Revocable: Consent can be withdrawn at any time, and any activity must stop immediately
- Clear communication: Consent is communicated clearly through words or actions

Informed consent includes going over sexual health and disclosing anything that could impact a partner. Without all the information being presented your partner is unable to give consent fully.

It is also much harder to disclose your herpes status after sexual activity happens. Disclosing after you have already exposed a partner to herpes can lead to the partner not only being upset about the herpes but also make them feel angry or betrayed being that you lied to them or withheld information. The disclosure conversation goes much more smoothly when both partners are having open and honest communication before any risk of transmission so they feel that they have a choice and can make an informed decision. Hiding your herpes from a partner makes herpes seem much more scary, dangerous and something that you are embarrassed about which will also make your partner uneasy rather than if you are open and confident.

Even with hook ups or one night stands, disclosure is important. What if you have an amazing time and want to see the person again? Now you will have to disclose after the fact which as stated above is much harder to do.

If you decide to not disclose you are starting a relationship based on hiding part of yourself which will lead to having to lie to your partner. If you take medication you will have to hide it or lie about what it is for. If you have an outbreak you will have to make excuses for why you cannot have sex, or why your partner can't see you naked. You will constantly be living with the "herpes hammer" over your head hoping that your partner doesn't find out or leave you because of it. There is also always a chance of transmission even with antivirals, condoms, and no outbreaks there is a small chance that you could transmit to a partner which will be a major shock if you do not disclose.

Is It Selfish To Be With Someone Without Herpes?:

No, it is not selfish to date like a "normal" person. As long as you are open and honest about your herpes status and having open communication with all your partners there is nothing wrong with dating, having sex and/or relationships with anyone you would like. Some people feel inherently guilty exposing a herpes negative partner to the virus when there are others out there without herpes however this is not something to worry about as long as you are upfront and respectful.

- 1. You are more than just a walking herpes outbreak:** it can be easy to slip into a mindset that you are less than, worthless or "damaged goods" when diagnosed with something like herpes due to the stigma. However you have so much more to offer a partner than herpes. You are a human with hobbies, interests, a personality, a job, etc. all of these things are reasons to date you. Herpes is part of you but it isn't the whole picture. Having herpes should not limit who you can and can't be with just like having kids from a previous relationship shouldn't limit you to dating only other single individuals with kids. Just because a partner doesn't have their own children doesn't mean they aren't open to being a parent. Same with herpes just because someone doesn't have it doesn't necessarily mean that they aren't open to learning about it and working with you to have safe sex.
- 2. Consent is key:** the person you are engaging with is a consenting party in your relationship (whether it is just sexual or fully dating). If you are open and give all the information about herpes, if they are mature enough to have sex they are mature enough to make their own informed decision on if they are willing to be exposed or not. There is no need to feel guilty as long as you are not willingly trying to give them your herpes.
- 3. Herpes is very common:** 50-80% of the population has herpes in some form so most people you interact with either have it, or know someone who does. Sometimes people do not even realize that they know about it until the conversation comes up and they realize that their mother had cold sores and those cold sores are actually herpes.
- 4. Most people have it and are unaware:** just because there are people out in the world without herpes doesn't mean that they for sure do not have it. This person you are

interacting with could be someone with herpes that is unaware, or the next person they interact with could have it and not know and expose them anyway unknowingly.

5. **You are a safer partner than someone who is unaware of their status:** knowing your status, being open to talking about it, knowing your triggers, and/or taking antiviral or supplemental medication makes you a safer partner than those who are unaware of their status and those who in general are uneducated around sexual health.
6. **Every person you meet has a different lived experience with herpes:** Some have it and are waiting for the opportunity to disclose to YOU, some are educated on it and are aware of precautions that can be taken and have no issue with being exposed to it, some have been with someone in the past with it or have friends/family with it, some are uneducated but open to learning, and for some it can be a deal breaker.

If you prefer to only date someone else who has herpes, that's completely valid. For some people, the fear of transmission feels overwhelming and would create too much stress in a relationship. It's okay to have that preference, as long as it's not holding you back from living your life fully. What's important is checking in with yourself: if you find that herpes is the **only** reason you're not pursuing connections, or if you're feeling stuck, isolated, or discouraged because of it, that's a sign to work on your mindset and self-confidence. You deserve to date, connect, and enjoy relationships without letting herpes define your worth or your options. If you are struggling with this internalized stigma or feelings of low self worth it would help to talk to someone especially a licensed professional, trusted friend or family member or a support group for herpes (a list of support groups for herpes can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1e4Fo47eyvqbLr2N3zsVF8ib48X9Wahy4LG4mY_Alk5E/edit?usp=sharing)

There is no need to feel guilty about shooting your shot with someone that you like or find attractive. As stated above every person on the planet has things that are deal breakers. So being rejected for having herpes is no different than someone rejecting a person for having kids, for working an undesirable job, for not liking a certain politician or musical artist. There are a million and one reasons for people to be rejected daily and if someone is not willing to learn about a very common STI like herpes then they are probably not the perfect person for you anyway.

Things To Think About & Remember Pre-Disclosure:

1. **Rejection Is Not A Reflection On You Or Your Personality.** There are many reasons that you can be rejected for herpes but **NONE** of them are an indication of you being a bad person or being undeserving of love. **MOST** people who reject others for having herpes are uneducated about the subject and are living life with the "ignorance is bliss" mindset. Many could have herpes and have no idea, could be sleeping around with others who do not know their status or just do not understand how herpes spreads etc. Ask yourself:

- Did the person ask about your STI status prior to bringing up having sex?

- Did they talk about condom usage or other protection methods prior to you bringing it up?
- Did they provide their own STI results or were they going on the “I have no symptoms therefore I am clean” method of testing?
- When you disclosed your status, were they open to discussing the topic further? Did they ask questions? Or did they immediately ghost, or reject you.

If you answered no to any of these questions then the person “rejecting you” is uneducated and narrow minded and either have herpes already and do not know or will get it in their lifetime being they are uneducated on STIs. This is not a reflection on you or your status, this is a failing of society and proper education.

2. **Everyone Has Something That Is A Rejectable Trait.** It’s not just those of us with herpes or STIs. People get rejected daily for things outside of their control or even within their control that they wouldn’t want to change about themselves. Some examples include political views, religious beliefs, lifestyle choices, having children, disabilities, music taste, horoscope sign, kinks, this list is endless. Everyone has preferences, hard limits and things that would make you reject someone. Do some personal reflection on things that you have rejected / passed on dating others for. Being rejected for herpes is no different than being rejected for voting for a particular person or liking a different type of music. I know for me personally I have decided to not date someone for being into cross fit and a gym lifestyle because I knew that it was something that I was not interested in doing. It doesn’t mean that that particular person had anything wrong with them, they just didn’t fit with me personally.
3. **The Trash Takes Itself Out:** Anyone who is rude about your herpes status or is unwilling to learn about it to make an informed decision is not a life partner or someone you want to be with anyway. The trash takes itself. A lifetime partner should be with you in sickness and health. Herpes is a skin virus that is not deadly or debilitating. The main concern with herpes is the stigma, not the physical symptoms. Someone who is truly interested in you as a person should be willing to have an adult conversation about something like this and find something that works for both of you. Anyone who makes you feel less than for having this is not someone you should want to spend romantic or sexual time with. Even for hookups if the person is unwilling to have an adult conversation about STIs what would happen if a pregnancy was to result from your one night stand? Would they want to talk about that or would they ghost you for that as well?
4. **Never Settle For Less Than You Deserve.** It can become easy to slip into the mindset that you deserve less being you have herpes and settle for the first person that accepts your status. **NEVER** lower your standards for anything. Herpes is such a common virus 1 in 5 adults have HSV-2 and 50-80% have HSV-1. That hot person at the end of the bar has the same 1 in 5 shot at having herpes as anyone else. (Maybe a higher chance being hot people have a higher chance of having sex with more partners.) Everyone deserves love and happiness; herpes does not change this fact at all! You have no idea who secretly either has herpes or who is well educated and has no issue with dating / sleeping with someone

with herpes. By limiting yourself you are rejecting yourself without giving that person a chance to make an adult informed decision.

5. **Most People Are Unaware Of Their Own STI Status.** Most people have no idea about their own personal herpes status. You may want to talk about STI status and testing before disclosing your status. Mention to your potential partner that herpes isn't included in a standard STI panel and see if the person was ever tested. You may be stressed about disclosing for no reason. You may want to have a date at a clinic to see what you are working with. Reminder that around 80% of the earth's population has some form of herpes.

Sources:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/herpes/about/>
- <https://questdirect.questdiagnostics.com/products/STD-Basic-Screening-Panel/8dbfa07f-969d-417e-be36-b6166b7720bb>
- This is all **information on herpes testing**. How to read the test, where to get the tests done, the limitations of the testing and which test may be right for you or your partner. https://docs.google.com/document/d/12WNlb6LT4uzTTlqp07vtfWjm5oclHav3ZyED_U0ml8o/edit?usp=sharing

6. **Never Let Someone Make You Feel Less Than:** During your disclosure there is a chance the person you are disclosing to may not be the nicest about it (though this does not happen as often as you may think). Just be prepared to know your worth and walk away from any situation that makes you feel down about yourself or unsafe in **ANY** way. Remember if someone gets angry/upset with you for "wasting their time" for going on dates with disclosing upfront they are in the wrong. Do not let them make you feel guilty and **DO NOT** apologize. No one is owed your medical history or your full back story before a first date or even a 5th date. As long as you are disclosing before any risk of transmission you are doing the right thing. When dating no one shows up to a 1st date and lays all their baggage, health history, or "red flags" on the table for a relative stranger to pick through. The first dating stage is to get to know each other and decide if they are someone you even want to open up to or sleep with. (Note that if you are looking for something more casual or if you are ready to have sex on a first date that is also okay and then you should disclose prior to any activities that may pose a transmission risk). Never allow yourself to be insulted, yelled at or shamed for herpes. Also do not allow yourself to be convinced that them accepting your status is something that you need to be thankful or indebted to them for. Do not let them use it as an excuse to treat you badly or to convince you to accept behaviors that you do not like.

7. **These videos are by herpes advocates on how to change your mindset around disclosing to help make it less scary.** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/rmjDsTh2emFgivbC6>

Basic Do's & Don'ts:

✓ **Do's** ✓

✓ **Before Not After:** ✓

Have the conversation sometime **before** there is any contact that could transmit HSV. Waiting until after a partner was exposed to getting herpes will make it **MUCH** harder to do the disclosure. Your partner will feel betrayed or lied to making them much less receptive and much more defensive.

✓ Talk About Testing: ✓

Talking about STIs and testing isn't solely on the person who has HSV, there are other STIs that can be caught. Bring up testing and see if the other person was tested recently for all STIs including herpes. (In most cases herpes is not included on a standard STD panel). If not make a date at the clinic and get tested together if they come back positive for herpes a disclosure convo may not even be a big deal if you both have the same strain. This is also a good segue into a disclosure and safe sex convo.

✓ Be Confident: ✓

If you must read only one thing today: **confidence**. Imagine you've been dating someone. They sit you down, and in a shaky voice, looking away and tearing up, tell you they have an incurable, contagious disease. Yeah... that might not go so well. Now imagine they say, as chill as if they're asking you to pass the salt, *"Hey, just so you know, I have herpes. I barely think about it but it's worth mentioning so we can talk about protection that makes you feel good, because I'd like to have sex with you. Lemme know if you have questions."* That would go better! When people hear a disclosure, their inevitable, natural thought is *"what if I get this too?"* You are the living, breathing example in front of them. Show that you're thriving.

✓ Be Informed: ✓

Being informed will help the disclosure go smoother as you can readily answer questions that the potential partner may have. Do not go into a crazy info dump right away but if the person starts asking you some questions you can confidently answer them. This will help ease their mind, most of the herpes stigma is due to lack of information and the unknown so by having those answers ready it will make the word herpes less "scary".

✓ Try Low Risk Disclosures: ✓

Trying to disclose to people you're not that invested in can be a great way to get the jitters out. Heck, it's not uncommon to want to get rid of someone at a bar or a "meh" Tinder match by telling them you have herpes, but they don't leave. If you're seeking practice, lean into these opportunities.

✓ Practice: ✓

Even by yourself, if you won't be disclosing over text. When you're at the point that you could deliver a disclosure keeping a typical amount of eye contact, without the "um", "uh", and "like" filler, you're in a good spot. Be amazed at how big a difference it makes. For me the word herpes wasn't something I could even say aloud to myself let alone another person so I practiced saying it aloud in the mirror until I could say it without freaking out. You can also practice with friends or even AI tools like Chat GPT or Snapchat AI to get more comfortable.

✓ Chose The Right Time & Place: ✓

This is situational depending on how you would like to disclose for example if you are planning on disclosing through text message or phone call make sure the person is not in the middle of something like work or school or surrounded by friends. (If they are surrounded by others they may get outside feedback rather than thinking for themselves.) Wait until they are in a space of mind to have an adult conversation. You can say something like "hey I have to talk to you about something but I want to make sure that you aren't busy or distracted". If you are doing an in person disclosure, do so in a place where you will not be interrupted. Also make sure it is a safe situation to do so. If you are aware that your potential partner is aggressive or can potentially escalate things to an unsafe level you may want to do it somewhere public like a park or a quiet restaurant to ensure your safety.

✓ Give Space & Time: ✓

A partner needing time to think is not necessarily a bad thing, some people need some time to process or learn about it. **HOWEVER**, know your worth. They should not be going radio silent or change how they speak to you. They should be asking questions or checking in while doing their research. They should not be rude or treat you differently than before. If someone who was previously messaging you daily suddenly disappears for days after a disclosure, move on. That is not someone you should want to date or sleep with. Communication is very important in any type of relationship and if they are able to just stop talking to you for that long they are not a responsible partner.

✗ Don't ✗

✗ Don't Lower Your Standards: ✗

Having herpes does not mean you need to lower your standards in any way shape or form. Know your worth and understand that this worth does not change now that you

have herpes. Only date people you **WANT** to date never settle just because someone accepts your herpes status.

✗ Don't Reject Yourself: ✗

Many people with herpes will over read into conversations with potential partners and take things they say as an indication that they will be rejected for herpes so they pull away, ghost or end things without actually disclosing. They will say things like “they are too hot there is no way that they will accept me” or they mentioned that they are super hygienic so that makes me not an option. This is not true. The only way to know if a partner will reject you is to have the conversation. Also, during the disclosure avoid phrases like “I wouldn’t sleep with me either” or “I would understand if you want to never talk to me again”. You are not only putting yourself down but you are not leaving the conversation open to questions.

✗ Don't Treat This As A Confession: ✗

Your partner will pick up on your body language as much as the words themselves; if you're signaling that this is a big bad scary thing, they'll run. HSV is in reality a lame virus that people are weirdly obsessed with, and if you treat it that way, they'll notice. Try to keep calm and confident and your partner will mirror that energy.

✗ Don't Wait Too Long: ✗

There is no correct or incorrect time to disclose as long as it is before and transmission risk activities however waiting too long can be problematic. Waiting until the heat of the moment may rush the person into making a snap decision they may be angry about later. Or waiting months even without at risk behavior can be problematic because you will become emotionally invested without knowing if the person feels that herpes is a deal breaker. It is best to disclose while everyone is clothed and thinking in the correct headspace before anyone is too emotionally invested.

✗ Don't Make It A Monologue: ✗

Your disclosure should be short and sweet and open-ended to promote a conversation. If you have a script that is lengthy and only you are talking, you are not allowing your potential partner to process the information or ask questions. You may be over explaining or freaking them out with too many facts or just an endless explanation that over complicates things. By keeping it short you are allowing the partner to express their concerns and will leave you open for more of a back and forth conversation rather than all the pressure to be on you and you alone. Sexual health conversations are important for BOTH partners to be having regardless of STI status so this disclosure shouldn't be a one person monologue.

Don't Apologize:

Having herpes does not define your character. It is a common virus. It is nothing to apologize for or feel shame about. If you bring apologies into the disclosure it makes it seem like you did something wrong or there is something about this to feel sorrow about. Herpes is just a small part of who you are and you should never apologize for a part of yourself or for having a past. Do not let the person that you are disclosing to, make you feel guilty for "wasting their time" if you went on dates with them previously. **NO ONE** is entitled to your medical history or your entire back story on date one or at all until you are ready. As long as you disclose your status before putting the partner at risk of transmission you did the right thing.

Don't Thank Them For Being Nice Or Sticking Around:

There are several reasons for this. One, you aren't a charity case to be overjoyed at scraps of attention; it's hard for someone to respect you if they don't see you respecting yourself. Two, they aren't doing a favor by discussing sexual health. This is a baseline that everyone having sex needs to be able to meet. Third, like the above points, it's another opportunity to unintentionally plant the idea in their head that they're expected to decline. *Avoid a self-fulfilling prophecy.*

All this said, finishing with a "thanks" can be totally fine, so long as you aren't implying they've done a favor to you and it's said in the same short, uninteresting way to change topics as if there were no STIs at all.

Dealer's Choice

How You Disclose:

Some people prefer text, or a call, or in person. Do what **YOU** like best. This conversation is stressful / nerve wracking for most people; you shouldn't add to the stress by disclosing in a different way than you are comfortable normally communicating. If you normally communicate via text then do a texting disclosure, if you are confident over the phone then try a phone disclosure basically whatever fits **YOUR** lifestyle will go best.

What to Say:

Much of disclosing is personal. There is no single approach to take. People fret over the best possible wording and other decisions, but they all have pros and cons. Read the room as best you can, but you can't really know in advance which approach is going to click well for a given person, so trust your gut and stop worrying over which is "best".

YOU are the only variable you can control. The "best" is the one that makes **YOU** most comfortable. If it feels right to you, it's the right thing to do.

Facts & STATS:

Some people find statistics comforting; some find them overwhelming. These can include the rates of HSV in the population, transmission rates, and how that is affected by antivirals and protection. See later in this document for these and other information for your partners. It is best to keep it short and sweet and let them come to you with the questions that they have so you don't overwhelm them.

Persnoal Information:

It may make you feel better to tell the whole story of how you got herpes or that may be what is causing you the anxiety. Remember the person is not entitled to the entire history of how you got herpes however if that is something you would like to share that is **YOUR** choice. For some people taking the personal story part of it out can help you stay calm and less emotional. But for others it may help them to weave a personal story that is something you can decide for yourself if it is a story you want to share or not.

Humor:

Some people joke to keep it lighthearted (like "I'm in a very exclusive club: only two thirds of the world is in it, or I have the hot sex virus also known as HSV, or have you heard of cold sores I get the spicy kind); some keep it straight and to the point.

Timeline for Disclosure:

Some people disclose in their dating profiles, on the first date, on the second date, in between dates, or right before an activity that could cause transmission. The only advice you'll find here for those pursuing a longer term relationship is that like many other topics (Are you religious? How do you vote? Do you want kids?), it's a bad idea to wait so long that you get attached before having that conversation.

Ways To Start The Conversation:

1. **Ask Them About Testing:** Take the pressure off yourself entirely. Ask the other person when the last time they got tested. Discussing sexual health should not be something that only people with an STI should be doing. When things are moving in a direction toward sex just bring up "Hey when was the last time you have been tested, and what specifically were you tested for? Most people have never been tested for HSV so they may have a recent test that didn't include herpes. Then you can follow up with "My last test was ____ and it came back positive for HSV___. Have you ever been tested for HSV?" This is a good way to educate as well as show that you are responsible about your sexual health. Herpes isn't the

only STI out there so asking about testing / birth control should be a conversation **EVERYONE** is having.

2. **Waiting Until The Convo About Sex Comes Up Naturally** and disclose while plans are being made. For example wait until plans are being made as to where you are meeting for sex/hooking up and just casually mention “yeah I cannot wait to see you on Friday but before I come over I just want to let you know I have HSV. It's not a major deal, I just like letting my partners know before things get too sexy”. This way it's casual, concise and you were already on the subject of sex.
3. **Date At The Clinic:** You could suggest a date at a clinic for both of you to get tested and compare notes over a lunch date. This takes the pressure off you fully as most people have never been tested for HSV so they may have it and not even know.
4. **Send A Video:** This is a video that you can send to a partner to get the STI conversation started <https://photos.app.goo.gl/D2qYJn5mJvrPNPpy7> it does not tell the person that you have an STI it just gets the ball rolling to talk about STI testing. TikTok user PickeringFitness also has a couple of great example videos on how to start a conversation about sexual health / disclosing which can be found here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/yRiTb8ixo4X8ApmcA>
5. **Using Social Media.** There are many platforms that talk about not only herpes but all sexual health, and STIs you can get the ball rolling by sending a video about them casually in conversation and see their reaction to gauge whether they are open minded or not. Basically just send the video with an “OMG this just popped up on my feed did you know this!!” And see how they react and use it as a segue into a disclosure. This is a list of social Medias about herpes. There are podcasts, YouTube, TikToks, blogs, Instagram pages, subreddits, and websites that could have “come across” one of your socials to share with your potential partner. <https://sites.google.com/view/social-media-about-herpes/social-medias>
6. **Use Dating App Features.** Dating apps are always updating and adding new features. For example, Hinge now has a feature called Match Note where when there is a match with a potential partner it sends them a note for their eyes only. People have used this feature to disclose herpes as it takes the heavy lifting off of you. It also eliminates you getting attached to someone and being crushed if they are not okay with your herpes status as they can just unmatch you with no fuss.
7. **Use The “I Have A Friend” Method.** It's an old cliché but it works. This can be especially helpful if you are trying to disclose to someone you know already who you are debating taking things to another level with but you are unsure if they will react badly or will tell others that you have it. Mention that you have a friend that was diagnosed with herpes and they are freaking out about dating. Gauge their reaction and see if it's worth exploring further.
8. **While There Is A Build Up.** For instance during a hot makeout session. You can pull back and say something like, “god you're so hot... let's talk about sexual health before we go any further” or “let's go through a few things before we go any further” then you can bring up things like condoms, birth control, STIs, STI testing, kinks, hard limits etc.

- 9. After A Heated Moment:** Another good segue in case you don't want to do it in the moment is to after you leave from a hot makeout session is to text, call or wait until things cool down say "Hey since it seems like things are seeming to head in this direction..." and either disclose or bring up sexual health in general.
- 10. Use A Fun Conversation Prompt:** A reddit user (u/SuccotashSimilar8275) in the early conversation stage, she made a picture of a list of 20+ dealbreakers (including STDs) using ChatGPT and asked them to pick their top 5. Depending on the answer it can give you some insight on your potential partner's opinion/ knowledge on STDs/STIs. If it is a number 1 dealbreaker for them you may want to end things before disclosing, if it is on doesn't even make the list it can give you the starting point for a conversation. Even if it makes the list but on a lower number you can ask them why each one makes the list. You can see if it is a lack of knowledge, or if they are really against anything to do with STIs prior to disclosing. For the full list to send your partner click here:
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/pSfzceQewceEkCMB8>
- 11. Two Truths & A Lie.** On dating apps a lot of the time there is a prompt option for 2 truths and a lie. You can put one of your truths as "has an STI" or "has HSV" or "tested positive for the Hot Sex Virus" something like that. This can get a convo started or if someone in your area sees it that you don't want knowing about the herpes you can just be like "yeah that was the lie lol"
- 12. Disclosure Through A Questionnaire:** You can also send a questionnaire prior to your date. This questionnaire does not have to be based solely on herpes or STIs but has that question included amongst others. This is an example of a questionnaire that you can make yourself:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdAuTISfjQTaEjBirKEYsT13-PDYyDhTYXxUwqphS_zE6YGOW/viewform?usp=sf_link. To make your own free questionnaire you can use websites such as:
- <https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/>
 - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/home>
- 13. Put it straight into your dating profiles.** Some people feel comfortable just putting HSV Positive in their bio. It eliminates a real need to disclose or having an awkward conversation if the only people who swipe on you already know that you have it. Just be sure that people are reading your bio as sometimes people blindly swipe without reading. Personally I feel that not everyone in a certain mile radius needs to know my medical history, only people that directly come in contact with me or that I am ready to share that part of my life with need to know my herpes status. In general dating profiles are for people to get to know you and your personality not for putting medical information or "red flags / deal breakers" (no herpes is not a deal breaker for MANY partners) but it is much easier to talk about and disclose after talking to the person.
- There are secret codes that some people may recognize in dating app bios that only people with herpes really know about. Things like using a Strawberry emoji 🍓 in your dating profile is being pushed on Reddit for people with herpes to use as an

indicator. There is also a more old school code "437737" which is a numeric code for the word "HERPES" based on a standard phone keypad. While you can use these codes it is important to still have a discussion about herpes / STIs as not everyone knows what they mean and people may use the 🍓 as just a cute a flirty emoji not knowing that it can have a deeper meaning.

Writings You Can Read/ Send People:

- **Guide For Partners, Friends, or Family Of A Herpes Positive Person:** this is a guide to help people around you without herpes to navigate the information and support you the best way possible.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1A_04GDxbTdP79zIkLJgwPnOpj2J7pGrzwfnSKLoQ9Rg/edit?usp=sharing
- **A Helpful Pamphlet You Can Print!:** very shorthand and easy to read with basic herpes facts on it.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KFFjWvPKnwMPSSwrU0GAmWeXbOlh9336/view?usp=drive_sdk
- **Herpes Facts At A Glance:** Great print out to hand to partners!
https://drive.google.com/file/d/16D0reDI37sYz-Dp0rjITVSmi4MWc_swU/view?usp=sharing
- **To Whom It May Concern:** is an open letter disclosing for you with explanation as to what having herpes means in a relationship.
<https://askingforafriend.us/articles/f/to-whom-it-may-concern> if that link is no longer active the website was downloaded as a pdf here:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aBY6uuDNQUGsnu2dl3BTI5qqiXU-nxEF/view?usp=sharing>
- **Herpes: Slaying The Stigma** is a collection of information, statistics, further resources, and a page (sadly specific to GHSV-1) to send negative partners.
<https://sites.google.com/view/herpes-slaying-the-stigma>
- **The Positive Guide To Disclosure:** This document made by Herpes Opportunity is great for helping you through your disclosure. Don't let the fear of having "the talk" hold you back. Learn how having "the talk" can actually make your romantic relationships even better and more connected than before.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JX68e32ffBOmXxyUUgMiJ8WgeJqMvENw/view?usp=sharing>
- **How To Reduce Herpes Transmission Risk To A Partner:** pamphlet to print/send to a partner!
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HIgdl91H2uKlrwxndzM9WLXNTmIFBWG2/view?usp=sharing>
- **Herpes Disclosure Sheet:** Made by a member of the support group I am in. It is a simple sheet that has an overview of herpes and its statistics.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YxsbNe7OsRdjqn2osUTLsAF-xl6drSY9YTTuk7tsw8/edit?usp=sharing>

- **Gentlemanly Advice: The Girl I'm Dating Just Told Me She Has Herpes. How Do I Handle This Maturely?**: Prime magazine answers a submitted question of a man who was disclosed to by a woman he was seeing. The article does a great job to answer his questions and explain herpes in a non-intimidating way with resources, facts and compassion.

<https://www.primermagazine.com/2016/learn/the-girl-im-dating-just-told-me-she-has-herpes> if that link is no longer active the website was saved as a pdf here:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gQdrPSPO29d0keM75LhuZ_EpOq6Wx9KA/view?usp=drive_link
- **My Partner Just Told Me They Have Herpes. I Don't. Now What?**: Planned Parenthood always has amazing resources for STIs and sexual health and this article is specifically aimed for people without herpes to help them understand what herpes is and how to navigate dating their herpes positive partner.

<https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/planned-parenthood-advocates-arizona/blog/my-partner-just-told-me-they-have-herpes-i-dont-now-what> if that link is no longer active the website was saved as a pdf here:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_8SeyrD5_4OJdsJNXOwxCq-N7tNPPXXZ/view?usp=sharing
- **How to Talk To Your Partner About Herpes**: Written by Valentina Milanova it is a good outline for how to navigate a herpes disclosure and conversation including dos/don'ts information to share and safe sex practices.

https://www.yourdaye.com/en-us/vitals/cultural-musings/how-to-talk-to-your-partner-about-herpes/?srsId=AfmBOop2tqhhYgBNy8_teKc2TNWMojWyMt3ppU9LTjDLx0nNDPwC9VRV if that link is no longer active the website was saved as a pdf here:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jZJOasOhkoW1BqASANP6Nzaze-NZJsBV/view?usp=sharing>
- **How To Disclose A Herpes Diagnosis To A Partner, From Someone Who Has It:** Even though this article is written for Women's Health Magazine it is useful for all genders. It gives great insight on disclosures, basic facts, and how to handle the stigma that comes with a herpes diagnosis.

<https://www.womenshealthmag.com/sex-and-love/a19930060/how-to-tell-someone-you-have-a-n-std/> if that link is no longer active the website was saved as a pdf here:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13DJKsYkuWu4TeOK59EPzK0c01Y4oHphz/view?usp=sharing>
- **Herpes: A Patient's Guide**: Smart Sex Resource This 25-page colour booklet talks about herpes symptoms, transmission, testing and treatment. It also offers information and support for people getting a new diagnosis of herpes and discusses dating when you have herpes. Also included are online and phone-based herpes supports as well as counselling resources in British Columbia.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1E9A_uPZZeBDkzQlnNhNI5-O6pUPdKUbk/view?usp=sharing for other languages <https://smartsexresource.com/resources/herpes-a-patients-guide/>

Things To Think About Post Disclosure:

Dating Guide: You did the hard part: you disclosed your herpes status and the person has accepted your disclosure. Now you are unsure where to go from here and may be still concerned that the person made the “wrong choice” by being with you, or you are unsure how to keep that partner safe or how to navigate dating with herpes. This is the guide for you.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/12loz28ql8CYzmpxG9EMaeYrTZZB9c_jQf7aka2dslms/edit?usp=sharing

Why Would Someone Date Someone With Herpes?

This is a logical question most people ask themselves when someone is accepting of their herpes status: Why? Why would someone put themselves at risk of catching an incurable STI just to be with you or sleep with you? And there are many answers to this question that range from genuine to sleazy and it is important to understand each situation as it is. Trust your gut and realize that not everyone has the same experiences as you and just because you have some internalized stigma surrounding herpes does not mean that others do.

- Some partners have previous experience with dating with herpes or have had a friend or family member teach them about it.
- Some partners may not realize until after your disclosure that they either might have it and not know, have slept with someone without knowing their status or that they have never been tested at all which makes them realize how much safer they are with someone who is educated and knows their status.
- Certain places/ sexual communities are more open minded and willing to learn about sexual differences whether it be kinks, STIs or sexualities.
- People with scientific/ medical backgrounds tend to approach STIs from a scientific mindset rather than a social or emotional one and understand herpes for what it is, a Virus nothing special and nothing to be that concerned over being it is so common.
- People also understand that life happens and that things happen outside of our control and are willing to learn and grow with you.

Think of how you would have reacted if someone came to you that you were interested in being with, came to you in an informative, calm and confident way and disclosed their herpes status to you. Would you be mean to them? Would you ghost them? Or Would you hear them out and have a conversation about it. If you answered “Yes” to the first two questions then that will explain why you are feeling so confused about a partner being accepting and you have a lot of internal stigma to address and attack before feeling confident. If you answered yes to hearing your partner out then why do you feel that you do not deserve the same respect and understanding that you would give to others.

Red Flag Reasons of Acceptance to Look Out For:

- **Bug Chasers:** this is as scary as it sounds people who are actively seeking to catch herpes or other STIs. This isn't common but it is something to look out for. Look for people who seem obsessive about your herpes status and who ask strange questions about your outbreaks or if they pressure you to sleep with them during an outbreak. These people usually make themselves known early on as they hyper focus on herpes especially when talking about sex.
- **Power Moves:** Some abusive partners look for any soft spot in a person to use as a means of control. Disclosing a herpes status especially in the beginning seems like an easy target for these types of abusers. They will throw your status in your face as if they are doing you a favor by staying with you being you have herpes and they do not. They will say things like "you're lucky 'I'm with you" or "no one else will accept you like I do" as a way to keep you in a relationship you would otherwise leave.
- **Stuck With Me Now:** These are similar to bug chasers but instead of being a fetish it's another means of control. These people will wait until the relationship is either ending or going through a rough patch. If an abusive partner is fearful that you are planning on leaving them they may go out of their way to attempt to catch your herpes as a way to make you feel guilty into staying with them. "You can;t leave me now that you gave me this incurable STI". These people may suddenly want to stop using protection or try to convince you to stop taking medication. They may also say things like "I don't care if I get it being we will be together forever" or will try to convince you to look at, touch or have sex during your outbreak. Saying things like "it would just be easier for me to catch it now" or "I would rather catch it on purpose than be surprised later".
- **The Savior Complex:** this is someone who romanticizes your herpes and acts like your savior. They will act like their love will save you and that you are only good together. They have an "it's us against the world" attitude and thrive off you being sad and dependent on them for your happiness. They may bring up your herpes in a way to make you more depressed so you feel more attached to them. They may subtly remind you how "hard" your situation is so you cling to them as your only source of comfort. This is a control tactic, not devotion. You deserve a partner, not a rescuer.

What should I do if my partner says he's okay with my herpes but I'm not sure?

Discovering you have herpes and disclosing it to a partner can be one of the most vulnerable and anxiety-provoking moments in a relationship. So when you finally muster up the courage to tell your partner, and they respond with something like, "It's okay" or "That doesn't change how I feel about you," the relief is often mixed with confusion. Why?

Because while they **say** they're okay, something about their body language, tone, or follow-up behavior might not feel fully aligned. And now you're left wondering: **Is he really okay with it? Or is he just being polite?** Or worse, **Is he saying that now but secretly judging me or planning to leave?**

If you find yourself stuck in this mental spiral, know that you're not alone—and you're not unreasonable for having these concerns. Here's a thoughtful breakdown of what to consider, what to look for, and how to move forward when you're unsure if your partner's acceptance is genuine.

1. Understand Where Your Doubt Is Coming From

First, it's important to ask yourself why you're unsure. Is it because of something **they** did or said? Or is it more about **your own** inner conflict with having herpes?

Sometimes, even when a partner truly accepts us, we have trouble accepting ourselves. The stigma around herpes is powerful and can create feelings of shame, even when our partner is supportive. If deep down you still believe that having herpes makes you “less than” or “damaged,” it's easy to assume that others secretly believe the same.

Take some time to reflect. Is your doubt about them—or is it about your own sense of worth and desirability?

2. Look At Their Behavior, Not Just Their Words

People show how they feel through consistency between their words and actions. If your partner says they are okay with your herpes, but then avoids physical intimacy, becomes distant, or starts treating you differently, those are signs that something's not fully aligned.

Ask yourself:

- Do they still initiate affection, intimacy, or sex?
- Do they educate himself about herpes or ask thoughtful questions?
- Do they avoid you during outbreaks or seem overly fearful about transmission?
- Do they talk about a future with you in the same way as before?
- Do they avoid the subject of herpes or seem uncomfortable talking about it or sex in general?
- Are they pulling away? (Not communicating as much after the disclosure whether it be texting, calling, physically seeing etc.)

If their behavior seems off, it doesn't necessarily mean they are lying, but it could mean they are still processing, and hasn't reached a place of full understanding or comfort yet.

3. Have an Honest Follow-Up Conversation

Don't be afraid to revisit the topic. Many people are taken by surprise when their partner discloses having herpes, and they may not fully understand what it means at first. Your initial conversation may have caught them off guard, and their response—while kind—might have been more about not wanting to hurt you in the moment than an informed reaction.

Try saying something like:

"Hey, I just wanted to check back in about our convo the other day. I know it might've been a lot to process in the moment, and I totally get if you've had more thoughts or questions since then. No pressure at all, just want to make sure you feel okay to be real with me about it."

This opens the door to a more nuanced, honest conversation. Be prepared to answer questions or provide resources. The goal isn't to interrogate them or force them to "prove" their acceptance—it's to make space for real dialogue.

4. Gauge Emotional Maturity and Communication Skills

Not everyone is emotionally equipped to have mature, open conversations about STI status, health, or risk. If your partner avoids the topic altogether or becomes defensive when you try to talk about it, that might be a red flag, not just about herpes, but about communication in your relationship as a whole.

Healthy relationships require transparency and the ability to talk through difficult or uncomfortable topics. If your partner can't meet you in that space, it's worth asking whether this is someone who can truly show up for you long-term.

For instance, imagine discussing an accidental pregnancy with this partner. Is that something you would feel comfortable doing? Or even something as simple as a yeast infection, Jock itch or a UTI. These are things that can happen in any monogamous or casual sexual relationship and both partners should feel comfortable bringing up and talking about it without embarrassment.

5. Educate Together

If you sense that your partner is well-intentioned but uninformed, consider reading or learning together. Herpes is extremely common—up to 1 in 6 adults have genital herpes (HSV-2), and 50-80% of the world population has HSV-1. Yet, most people's knowledge comes from jokes, stigma, or outdated sex ed.

Offer articles, send reputable sources, or suggest watching a video together. If he understands what herpes *actually* is—the transmission risks, suppressive therapy options, and how to manage outbreaks—he might feel more confident. That knowledge may also help you feel more assured of his acceptance. As they say knowledge is power and stigma is rooted in the unknown and ignorance.

Most likely they will be most worried about how it affects them:

- 1. Risk of transmission:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xRL3jM3qLB5nh-b2B7tXOU2wrRoPgXclFBu7ICGpkbl/edit?usp=sharing>

- 2. Transmission Prevention Tips:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10ccLJMnXAKuKfpU5ng9-1CiWXGPTYYPfDOCvxeB4GX4/edit>

3. Common Myths About Transmission / Herpes In General:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-6oZmnfywTFNYSckKYC7Mh7MXZKrA0GUcztS8Bz5bW0k/edit>

- 4. You can also send them to social media pages that freely and confidently talk about herpes if you are not at that point in your self healing journey to talk super confidently about it yet:** This is a list of social Medias about herpes make a date and watch them together or send them to your partner to watch on their own. The accounts are funny and informative and all herpes positive. There is everything on there from podcasts, YouTube, TikToks, blogs, Facebook support groups, Instagram pages, dating pages, subreddits, and websites.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E6uCpRELkldFFqtTcYLkdC-3Zo50O4EEqaXJ-5j2cC8/edit?usp=sharing>

- 5. How to handle you if you are having an outbreak:** A good partner will ask you what happens if you have an outbreak and if there is any way for them to help or support you. Be prepared for that question and don't just blow it off or refuse their support because you feel that it "isn't their problem to deal with" they are your partner and should be your support system. See below for more information on how to handle having herpes in a relationship.

6. Work on Your Own Acceptance

Even if your partner is truly okay with your herpes status, if **you're** not, it can create friction in the relationship. You might self-sabotage or pull away, fearing that you're "lucky" to have someone stay. You may also stay in a relationship that is not a good fit out of fear that you will not find anyone else or that you deserve this treatment because you are "damaged goods". Herpes does not make you damaged AT ALL it is just a part of you it's not the whole part. There are so many partners out there that either have herpes already in some form or that are 100% accepting of it and do not care or are willing to learn about it and meet you where you are at. Never settle for less than you deserve, EVERYONE is deserving of happiness and true love. Relationships should never be a place where you settle and should add to your life not cause you stress or anxiety especially over something that you cannot control like herpes.

Self-acceptance is a process. Surround yourself with support, whether that's through online communities, a therapist, or talking to others who live with herpes. Remember: your value doesn't decrease because of a diagnosis. Herpes is a skin condition that carries stigma—but it does not define your worth, your desirability, or your capacity to love and be loved.

When you embrace that truth, it becomes much easier to trust your partner's love too. Try to pinpoint what is making **YOU** feel badly about herpes. There are many ways to cope with your internalized stigma:

- 1. Learning About It:** most times stigma comes out of fear of the unknown the more you learn about herpes the less scary it can be being you understand it better. This also helps ease a partner's mind if they have questions that you can confidently answer calmly from a scientific place rather than an emotional one. This is a list of common myths about herpes and why they are wrong with cited sources.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-6oZmnfywTFNYSckKYC7Mh7MXZKrA0GUczTS8Bz5bW0k/edit>

2. **Finding Support:** whether that be through therapy or with a community talking it through **HELPS**. Sometimes just telling a partner, family or friends isn't enough and you need to seek others who are also going through the same things that you are and can understand your situation or a licensed professional trained in helping you manage your very real and very valid emotions. This link is info about all support groups that I know of. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1e4Fo47eyvqbLr2N3zsVF8ib48X9Wahy4LG4mYAlk5E/edit?usp=sharing>
3. **Managing Outbreaks / Symptoms:** for some people with consistent outbreaks or symptoms it can be very difficult to think of anything else or feel “normal” again. You could also feel helpless to control the situation being herpes is “incurable” and so you feel that there is nothing you can do to help your situation. Though there is no cure currently for herpes there are many ways to help your body prevent outbreaks, manage symptoms and help you to feel more in control of the situation which can also ease stress. (As stress is a major trigger for herpes this can also reduce your outbreaks). This is the Outbreak guide I put together after talking to the support group and a bunch of redditors. There are non-prescription options as well as where to get antivirals cheap with and without insurance. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1w0nbGEJuiRHgKU4DjZQALX3vWA26MBZA7lhDmsHlbo/edit?usp=sharing>
4. **Hearing Positive Stories:** reading about other people's success in relationships, dating and even just living with herpes can help ease your mind that being happy with herpes is far from rare and is actually pretty normal. It is ok to be happy and have herpes.
 - These are a bunch of positive stories about herpes that I have found on Reddit. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/11sLzFHVpTWhNCzRSPgqp9pwPqzFrPiwHWJRO83j980M/edit?usp=sharing>
 - This is a list of social Medias about herpes. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E6uCpRELklIdFFqtTcYLkdC-3Zo50O4EEqaXJ-5j2cC8/edit?usp=sharing>
5. **Professional Help:** Therapy is a very important tool for any life changing event including a medical diagnosis of any kind. Therapy is especially helpful for medical diagnoses that are like herpes incurable and seem life altering. Getting a diagnosis like herpes can help you discover things about how you see yourself and how you measure your self-worth and these are big heavy topics that you could benefit from consulting with a licensed professional. Many people (myself included) measure their self-worth to the ability to find a romantic or sexual partner and getting diagnosed with herpes can make it feel like a daunting or even impossible task to ever be loved again. Society has also placed a heavy stigma on STIs that can make you see yourself as “disgusting” or “dirty” which is not true. Once you are able to accept the diagnosis in yourself it will make everything so much easier. It is much harder to cope, date, disclose etc. when you are also fighting the

internalized stigma. You also can fall victim to relying on outside validation in order to feel good about yourself. When you do not accept your own herpes status, if someone else accepts you (your partner) you will only feel good about yourself when around the other person. This happened in my own personal experience where whenever I was in a relationship I did not care that I had herpes but anytime I was single I went back to being depressed about my status. This was because I did not accept myself and was relying on a partner to make me feel good about myself. Therapy helps you work through these feelings and will help you have healthy coping mechanisms to get you to a point of self acceptance.

For Help Finding a Therapist With Insurance:

- <https://book.zocdoc.com/get-started/doctors/therapists>
- <https://www.findoctave.com/>
- <https://growththerapy.com/start/find-therapist-social/>

For Help Finding a Therapist Without Insurance:

- <https://www.betterhelp.com/get-started>
- <https://www.online-therapy.com/>
- <https://cerebral.com/>

7. Watch Out for Conditional Acceptance

Unfortunately, some people may **appear** supportive but later reveal more judgmental or conditional attitudes. This might sound like:

- **“I’m ok with this as long as I don’t get it.”:** While this sounds like a good response there is always a small chance that you may pass it to a partner even while taking all the proper precautions. By a partner phrasing it this way it can be a potential red flag that if an accidental transmission occurs your partner will blame you while accepting none of the blame themselves. This can cause you stress over not wanting to transmit more so than with a truly accepting partner.
- **“I just don’t want anyone else to find out.”:** Yes most people do not advertise their herpes to the masses however having a partner who is paranoid about others finding out is also a red flag. This could make you feel like a “dirty little secret” which doesn’t feel great. Also, clearly this is something they are worried about, meaning that they are carrying a lot of internal stigma and are embarrassed for you. It’s ok to want to keep sexual things private but to be very upfront about wanting to cover up part of yourself as if it is something to be ashamed of could be a red flag.
- **If they do not respect sexual boundaries:** if you are someone who feels that using condoms makes you feel more comfortable around having sex and your partner is trying to discourage it because it is not something they want, that is also a red flag. Sex is only fun if both parties are relaxed and comfortable. If your partner is pressuring you to have sex without a condom or when you are unsure if you are having an outbreak and want to be extra cautious that is not a good sign.

- **If they do subtle things that make you feel like a walking hazmat:** There have been many posts on Reddit that start with “My partner accepted my disclosure BUT....” where the partner sleeps with them but will shower or rinse out their mouth with mouthwash directly after. Or will engage in sexual activity only with clothing on or in one case I read only touch the person while wearing a latex glove. There are even some people who will ask so many questions about your herpes right before the sexual act as if to reassure themselves (did you take your meds?, Are you having an outbreak?, When was your last outbreak?, Are you sure I will be okay? Can I inspect the area to make sure it is clear?) While it is understandable a partner may want to take precautions there is a limit. Everyone's limit is different so what may be acceptable to one person may not be okay with another, the rule of thumb is if it makes you feel icky or like a walking germ it's not okay behavior and needs to be addressed. As stated above sex is only fun if both parties are comfortable. Clearly if your partner is this paranoid they are not comfortable and if you walk away from a sexual encounter hyper worried about transmission or feeling like a walking hamzad you are also not comfortable.
- **If they withhold sexual activity from you:** Some partners (especially those who are sex driven but foreplay lazy) will use your herpes as an excuse to not do some sex acts but will happily do others that focus on them. There are many cases where a partner will have unprotected sex with you but draws the line at oral sex because they are “afraid of catching it on the mouth”. Beware of these partners they are only using this as an excuse to not be a “giver”.
- **If they will use it in an argument or as an excuse for treating you badly:** Herpes should never be something that is brought up in an argument or ever thrown in your face in **ANY SITUATION**. Anyone that says anything along the lines of “You should be happy that I am even with you being you have herpes” or any insinuation that they deserve to be thanked or worshiped for “accepting your situation” is controlling and disgusting behavior.

It's okay for your partner to have boundaries and preferences, that's normal. But if those “conditions” feel shaming or controlling, you deserve to re-evaluate. You are not a burden. You are not lucky to be tolerated. You are worthy of being loved fully and without caveats.

8. Trust Your Gut

Your instincts matter. If something doesn't feel right—even if your partner is saying all the right things—it's okay to pause and reassess. You don't need to force a relationship if it doesn't feel emotionally safe.

Ask yourself: *Do I feel emotionally secure in this relationship? Do I feel wanted and valued—not in spite of my herpes, but as a whole person?*

If the answer is no, you may need to make a difficult decision about whether this relationship is truly serving you. Never stay somewhere or with someone that is not respecting, honoring, or is unsafe for you out of fear of being alone. Being single is much better than being in a relationship

that is causing you stress, anxiety, or isn't valuing you. (Yes even with herpes you are valuable and deserving of actual supportive, healthy love.)

9. You Deserve Enthusiastic Love—Not Tolerated Love

The ultimate takeaway is this: You deserve to be with someone who doesn't just *accept* your herpes, but who sees it as a small part of you—not a defining one. Someone who feels lucky to be with you, not like they're making a sacrifice. Someone who talks openly, treats you with care, and shows up emotionally.

If your partner is that person, amazing—nurture the relationship. But if they are not, or if you're still carrying unresolved fear and shame, remember: you're allowed to step back, heal, and wait for someone who will embrace you completely. (And that WILL happen) The more you love and accept yourself the less you will accept someone who doesn't. Herpes has made all my relationships stronger, and have more open and honest conversations especially in the beginning stages being you are starting the relationship off in an honest and open place with disclosing your status.

Final Thoughts

When your partner says they are okay with your herpes but you're unsure, it's important to listen to both your partner *and* yourself. **This situation isn't just about whether they are okay with it—it's about whether** ***you*** **feel secure, accepted, and emotionally safe.**

Relationships thrive on communication, trust, and mutual respect. And you deserve nothing less—herpes or not.

Written by **u/SurroundWithRight** with additions from **Bubblieinblu**
https://www.reddit.com/r/Herpes_Support_Growth/s/9FFgw4Hn7Q

Genital Herpes Disclosure “Scripts”/Examples:

The following are disclosure scripts that have worked for people who have herpes. Feel free to use one of these in your disclosure or mix and match parts to better fit your situation.

Michael

I like to have the talk the moment it becomes clear clothing is going to come off, usually during a steamy makeout on date 1 or 2. I'll play it by ear though. This is the gist:

I want to have a quick check-in about sexual health.

I get tested for everything Kaiser will let me, and I aim for every 3 months. I'm negative across the board. One thing they don't test for is HSV - the H stands for herpes. I don't need that test since like two thirds of everyone, I already have it.

I have type 1 which usually causes cold sores, though I got it below the belt. *Unlike* most people, I happen to know about it, and I take a pill to reduce transmission purely for my partners' peace of mind.

Statistically, I will go the rest of my life and never see symptoms and never pass it on. This doesn't affect my life at all except having this conversation.

So that's me. Happy to answer any questions you have. Otherwise, what should I know about you? Anything I should know about your body or sexuality, or even just what you really like?

I have a very high success rate with this approach. Some of that is due to pursuing my fellow freaky sex nerds in the first place — kink and poly, represent — but it's mostly the cool, calm, and confident attitude.

Notice the first and last paragraphs in that script. It's common to feel like disclosure is now this new bummer that interrupts the flow. You can both mitigate this and feel more confident (which is crucial) by reframing its purpose to you and your partner-to-be. Talking about sexual health and needs is a conversation *everyone* should be having before going to town, even two negatrons. By kicking it off, you are automatically morally superior and sexier than them, true fact, so act like it. This positions it not as a confession you're making, but an opportunity for both of you to verbalize what you're about.

It's okay to feel down about having to do this, even to grieve a past era. However, do keep the perspective that it's not that you now have a new responsibility, but you were previously getting away with something you shouldn't have.

Here's another way to put it:

Last night I hooked up with a herpes hottie -- she disclosed on her tinder bio. It was great being on the same level with someone. From a disclosure perspective, I could have allowed the encounter to proceed the same way it did in the past: go straight from tension to foreplay to pound town. I admit I felt that temptation.

However, I paused and kicked off the sexual health check-in, same as always minus the HSV education parts of course. I mentioned my testing, habits with barriers, and asked what I should know about her. All of that is important to go over with any sexual partner; HSV is not the only concern in the world.

BOTTOM LINE: That conversation isn't part of having HSV. That conversation is part of having sex as an adult.

You can normalize it even further by throwing in something else, like do you require condoms? only expect to do oral and not intercourse tonight? don't want to be touched somewhere? sure,

you met on balloonpoppingfetish.com, and your profile said you were into all kinds of balloons, but tonight are you only into the long skinny balloons?

This is an all-purpose two-way conversation, and it is as much their space as it is yours! I've noticed my internal thinking has shifted: I'm not calling it "disclosure" anymore, not in my head and not as much out loud. It's the sexual health talk / check-in. Disclosure is *one part* of that.

Truly, it's a good feeling now kicking off this convo. I get off a little on coming across like the experienced, mature one, and people react accordingly!

Happy disclosing. A full third of mine have said "me too", and three times people have disclosed to *me*. It is statistically weird to be HSV negative, so calm down and act like it. :)

Tara

Tara's Tips

- Find what the right time to disclose is for you, but don't wait more than a few dates at most. Dragging things out and becoming attached to someone can add pressure and make it appear that your HSV is a really big deal.
- Confident, unapologetic, and concise disclosures without a ton of facts or statistics are the best way to start. I like to note how I protect my partners to provide a sense of comfort and be armed with statistics in case they ask but I don't like to spew them.
- In most of my disclosures I like to use humor to lighten the mood because I don't think HSV is something dire or serious. Some of my approaches are a bit unconventional so I don't necessarily recommend them for everyone. I have used "I have a raging case of herpes" and then gone on to say I was joking and I am asymptomatic and some details about how I prevent transmission. I tend to wink or smile if I'm disclosing in person.

Skye

- **Practice!** The more you disclose, the better you're going to get at it and the more confidence you will have when delivering the news.
- **Get to know your own style.** We are all unique individuals, and so our disclosure styles will also be unique. Personally, I like to disclose early and disclose with a joke. Someone with a different communication style may choose to disclose by having a mature and frank discussion about sexual health. There are infinite ways to go about it, but it's important to find a way that YOU can deliver comfortably and confidently.
- **Do your research.** Some partners may not have done their due diligence on STIs and sexual health, and would like to know all about herpes. If they have any questions you will want to have the answers ready.
- **Understand your partner.** Certain people will be more receptive to one disclosure style over another. I've found that most people do not want to know the statistics (numbers are scary!!), but some people are *very* responsive to the numbers.

- **Self acceptance.** The more comfortable you are with having herpes, the more comfortable you will be with disclosing. Disclosing when you are still extremely distraught about your diagnosis is incredibly difficult, and can make rejection hurt even worse.
- **Be comfortable with rejection.** People get rejected over all sorts of things. People don't mesh for all sorts of reasons, and herpes is no exception. Understand that a rejection is not a reflection of your value, you're just not a good match! And isn't it good to know that sooner rather than later?
- **Speaking of sooner, disclose early.** The sooner you disclose the less hurt you're going to feel if you do get rejected.
- **Have fun!!!** Try out different disclosures. Treat it as an experiment! Test what works and what doesn't work.

Alex

I've found that going in with confidence is the best predictor of success. If I'm feeling confident I've found that it has a higher rate of them being understanding and wanting to move forward. I tend to just say something along the lines of:

"Also before we go any further physically or otherwise I wanted to let you know that I have herpes and I'm on daily antivirals for it. Not sure how much you know about it but lemme know if you want more info or if you have any questions/concerns about it."

That disclosure was a text disclosure and she had more questions she wanted to ask in person but I think it could work just as well in person. Really I think the biggest factor for a successful disclosure beside confidence is the other person's attitude and you can't control that at all.

Sara

I used to practice my perfect disclosure script out loud on walks and the confidence in my voice grew stronger. To be honest, I could rattle off a lot more stats almost a year ago because I was stuck on the idea of being rejected or judged and needing to defend my position. If someone can't accept my HSV, they don't fully understand the beauty of having a body or the general risks of sex IMO. The stats will always be online, but I am here to be a beautiful breathing example of the many, *many* people who got this virus from having a lil (or a lot) of sex and are very ok with it. I no longer stress about knowing that stats (personal preference).

There is no perfect disclosure script, use the natural ebbs and flows of conversation and the moment can present itself naturally. ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡ ⚡

Disclosing Tips:

1. Let it get a little heated sometime before disclosure.
 - a. Smooches, touches, zero risk transmission activities
 - b. Sexting, flirting, do your thing
2. Practice out loud and practice composing a text version of it.

3. Low Stake disclosure(s) (not much invested) can be good for gaining confidence.
4. Don't fight an urge to disclose, if it fits into the conversation go for it.
5. Do not bombard with information, read their response and open it up.
6. Be cool, confident and sexy. Make herpes sound irresistible.
7. Cut your losses, disclosures make you vulnerable, strong and human. <3

Gozde

I tweak my disclosure script to match the tone of the conversation but it usually goes like this. First I ask "how comfortable do you feel talking about sexual health right now?" so it's not out of nowhere then I say:

I was diagnosed with herpes 2 years ago, I don't know whether you know but it is the cold sore virus that is sexually transmitted. It's basically a skin condition and super common.

It's not on the regular std panels, they don't test you for it unless you have symptoms.

It's a lifelong condition but I never had any symptoms other than a weird flu when I first got it. I never had a skin outbreak. Most people are like me with either mild or zero symptoms.

The possibility of transmission is much lower for women, if I take medication and if condoms are used. Even though chances are low, it's not zero so I want you to know and make an informed decision. You don't have to decide now, take some time and you can let me know if you have any questions.

Jesse

So basically what I wanted to focus on was to let her feel like she had full control on the direction we went/she went from that point onwards. I felt that any personal opinion I could share with her would have unintended bias and perhaps even be seen as manipulation and so I tried to get as MUCH straight FACTS as I could about the virus and transmission rates etc as I could so she could make an informed decision without her having to feel the weight and difficulty of navigating that you and I share (as she was HSV neg) - this was my responsibility, not hers. Examples would be using the resources provided here, Instagram, podcasts, subreddits, etc. and continuing to educate myself as much as possible about this thing we all share now.

I think the biggest hurdle I have and continue to face is personal acceptance, and aiming to control what you can when it involves only your own self. Anything outside of that isn't in "your realm" so to speak, and whether it results in rejection or acceptance it ultimately can't define your own self worth. If you can't accept who you are or depend on others to accept you before you accept yourself, you're going to be hurt more often than not in my opinion.

Lauren

I have told over 25 people at this point about my herpes diagnosis. I have had three long-term relationships, a couple of hook ups, a couple of one night stands, and a couple of short term boyfriends. All of them ended due to non-herpes related issues. My advice to you is wait until you have your emotional state controlled before trying to date. It's not good for your mental health to put yourself out there too early, because occasionally you will get a rejection. I'm not going to lie, it stings. People that did reject me have not been mean about it, but it still sucks, and if that would've happened to me in the beginning I would not be able to handle it.

The way I go about telling people has followed a pretty standard format since I started. I usually wait until the subject of sex naturally comes up in conversation. (On average after the third date if it's a dating scenario). Once the convo turns into hooking up or going back to someone's place after a date.

I say "yeah I'm totally interested"..... and then I hit them with:

"Hey, before we meet up there's something I need to tell you. I have HSV. I have had it for ____ amount of time, and it's been ____ amount of time since my last outbreak."

I leave this last part out if it's been a recent time since my last break, just because it scares people. If you are taking any sort of medication you should add:

"I am on a daily pill which suppresses my outbreaks and lowers the transmission rate."

You can also add if you've had it for a while and not passed it on to anyone. The most important part is to say at the end:

"I am here for any questions. Nothing is embarrassing to me and I welcome questions. My main goal is for you to be comfortable."

I myself say "I know pretty much everything about it at this point. I've done a shit ton of research and nothing embarrasses me". This prevents a lot of ghosting situations. I also use "HSV" instead of "herpes" because there's less of a stigma attached to that word, and it basically means the same thing.

The key is confidence. If you seem wishy-washy or upset or really distraught about it, the other people will not feel comfortable to sleep with you or date you because if they see your nervous wreck about it then they're gonna be a nervous wreck about it too.

A disclosure video to send potential partners if you are too nervous to bring it up on your own: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/D2qYJn5mJvrPNPpy7>.

Find me on tiktok! @bubblieinblu

Pickeringfitness

Christopher is a herpes coach with HSV-2

Specific Disclosure Videos: [Pickeringfitness Disclosure Tips](#)

Watch all his TikToks Here: [@pickeringfitness](#)

Instagram: [@pickeringfitness](#)

YouTube: [@herpesconsulting](#)

1-On-1 Herpes Coaching: <https://go.herpesconsulting.com/coaching>

His approach is more of a sexual health discussion rather than a “confession of your status”. He emphasizes the importance of having conversations around sexual health regardless of STD status as it is a conversation that everyone should be having prior to having sexual intercourse. His approach is less vulnerable and more an equal discussion of STI testing between two potential partners.

Tips For Disclosure:

1. Be confident: the more confident you are the more at ease your partner will be!
2. Be educated: be prepared to answer questions that your partner may have. Also invite the person to ask questions. The more open you are the more comfortable the person will be with talking about it and also with dating you.
3. Do not make it about you! This should be a mutual conversation about sexual health between you and a partner. Sexual health is an important thing to talk about regardless of your STI status as the person you are disclosing to may have something that you also need to be aware of.
4. Remember that most people have herpes and have never been tested. (Cold sores are herpes and herpes tests are not included on a standard STI panel) If they aren't willing to physically show you the test they most likely have not been tested or are unwilling to be honest.
5. Follow your normal communication pattern. If you like to text your potential partners disclose over text messaging, if you like to talk on the phone then disclose over a phone call. Doing the herpes disclosure in a communication style not in your comfort zone will add unneeded stress and anxiety.
6. You should not disclose prior to or on the first date as you may not even like the person. Give it time and see if the person is even someone you want to be with sexually.
7. You should practice your disclosures with your friends, family or even Chat GPT, Snapchat AI etc. to become more comfortable. You can even practice with yourself in the mirror. The more you say it out loud the easier it is to disclose it to others.
8. There are many rejectable traits other than herpes. He has been rejected for things other than herpes and herpes is just another thing you could be rejected for no different than your height, weight, zodiac sign etc. Remember to ask yourself if the person rejecting you is even someone you would want to be with if they are willing to reject you for being open and honest about something that most people aren't.

9. Never apologize or put yourself down during a disclosure. Never use the phrase “if you don’t want to talk anymore I understand” or “I am sorry if I wasted your time” etc. This is inviting the other person to reject you rather than them making that decision on their own. Fake confidence if you’re not there yet.
10. To start the conversation to gauge a reaction prior to disclosing you can use things like:
- “I saw this guy on TikTok talking about herpes”
 - “My friend wants a female/male opinion on this, he/she needs to disclose their herpes status how would you want to hear that information”
 - “I saw online that herpes isn’t included on a standard STI panel. Did you know that?”
 - “I saw online that cold sores are herpes. Did you know that?”
 - “I saw online that 1 in 5 adults have HSV-2. Did you know that it was that common?”
 - “My friend and I were having a debate about whether cold sores are herpes. What is your opinion on that?”

Script That He Uses

Hey before things get physical let’s talk about sexual health because it is important to me. I am positive for HSV-___. Is there anything I need to know about your sexual health status in case we want to move forward?

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/yRiTb8ixo4X8ApmcA>

Suzbub

Female herpes coach with HSV-2

Specific Disclosure Videos: [Suzbub Disclosure Tips](#)

Watch all her TikToks Here: [@suzbub](#)

Instagram: [@suzbubs](#)

1-On-1 Herpes Coaching: <https://www.suzbub.com/supportcalls>

Disclosure Tips

1. Wait until you are comfortable with your own status prior to disclosing to others. This will make it easier to tell others if you are confident and comfortable with yourself.
2. Never use negative language while disclosing. Saying things like “I know this may be a deal breaker”, “I know I am disgusting”, “I understand if you reject me” being herpes already carries a negative stigma around it using this language perpetuates it and makes the person you are disclosing to more likely to reject you being most people are uneducated about herpes and instead of being open to learning you are giving them the green light to just reject you and move on.
3. Use lighter language and facts. State it as a fact and leave it open to questions at the end. More like “Hey I have herpes let me know if you have any questions about it”.
4. Be prepared to answer questions about it. Have sources available and be ready to answer some personal questions. People are VERY uneducated about STIs in general, especially herpes.

5. Do not wait until the heat of the moment. This can not only be a mood killer but also could lead to someone making an uninformed decision that they may regret later. The after sex “OMG did I just get herpes” conversation is never fun.
6. People lie about getting tested in general, and some may not even know that they have never been tested for herpes. Make sure to see their results to see what you are working with.
7. There is no timeline to tell someone that you have herpes. As long as you are disclosing your status prior to any activities that put the partner at risk you are disclosing correctly. If a partner’s “deal breaker” is herpes they should bring that up right away and ask you. It’s not your job to tell everyone your medical history right away just because it may be a deal breaker.
8. Do not restrict yourself to people with herpes. If that works for you that is great but there are some downsides.
 - You are more likely to trauma bond with the other person and neither of you will actually deal with your feelings around herpes.
 - People sometimes feel like they are stuck in a relationship being they found someone with herpes and are afraid that they will either not find someone else with it or the fear of disclosing is holding them back.
 - Most people with herpes do not use the apps specifically for herpes so you are restricting your dating pool to a much smaller number.
 - Many people who have herpes do not know that they even have it or have cold sores that they do not realize are herpes and they are using regular dating apps.

Suzbub Disclosure Script

She discloses right away during the talking phase of the relationship, she prefers over text message or in the dating app chat. This works for her for a few reasons:

1. You get it out of the way right away so it’s not “hanging over your head” while you are getting to know the person.
2. You do not get emotionally attached to one person who may reject you. This makes any rejection you may experience hurt less. Also usually on dating apps you are talking to multiple people at once so you can just move on to the next person no big deal.
3. Doing it over a text message makes the conversation more casual and comfortable. It lets the person have a facial reaction without you staring at them. It puts both of you less on the spot to react correctly.

“Hey before this goes any further, I just wanted to let you know that I have herpes and I am totally an open book. You can ask me any questions that you want about it.”

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/PX6GhMmsPH2fY4wq6>

SafeSlut

Female herpes coach with HSV-2

Specific Disclosure Videos: [SafeSlut Tips](#)

Watch all her TikToks Here: [@safe.slut](#)

Instagram: [@safe.slut](#)

1-On-1 Herpes Coaching: <https://safeslut.shop/>

All Other SafeSlut Resources: [SafeSlut Linktree](#)

Disclosure Tips

1. There is no wrong way to disclose as long as you are disclosing PRIOR to any activity that is a transmission risk.
2. Anyone uncomfortable or rude while discussing sexual health is a red flag  this is a conversation that EVERY adult should be having before engaging in sexual activity. Treat this as an open conversation between two people who are engaging in sex.
3. I would not wait until the heat of the moment. Wait until things are cooled off, go for a walk somewhere safe and not rushed.
4. Most people are just uneducated and are willing to learn. Humans by nature are curious. Giving them space to ask questions will open the door for them to learn about something that is considered “taboo” to ask questions about. Most partners will not be rude to you!
5. Remember herpes is just a virus. Putting it in that perspective helped me become more confident around it.
6. You shouldn't limit yourself to only people who have herpes. Most people have herpes; you shouldn't have to be limited to only those who have it.
7. Disclose the way that you feel the most confident. If you are a texter, text the disclosure etc.
8. If you are rejected for having herpes, remind yourself that that person is not meant for you and move on to the next person. Not everyone is meant to be with everyone. Every person has deal breakers.

Disclosure Script

How to bring up the conversation:

“Hey before we go any further, when was the last time that you have been tested?”

Because your own health is just as important as theirs. Also the way that they answer that question is very telling as well. You can gauge exactly what their education level around STDs is based on how they respond. For instance if they say “I’ve never been tested.” or “I’m clean, I’ve never had symptoms” or even with defensiveness like “ew why would you think I have an STI?”

That is someone that I would not want to date. After they respond with their test date / results I respond with:

“My last test date was _____ and everything was negative except HSV-____. Do you know what that is?”

A lot of time most people will not really know HSV and only know it as herpes or be a little confused. So if they respond that they don't really know what it is I say:

“It is genital herpes. Have you ever had a cold sore or do you know what a cold sore is?”

Most people have either had one or been with someone who has or have a family member with cold sores.

“Yeah it's the exact same thing as that only in a different location.”

This helps put it in perspective how common it is and gives them an idea of what to expect. I then ask:

“Do you have any questions?”

I like to keep it simple and not overload them with information as it can come off as you overcompensating or you trying to convince them to sleep with you. Which can feel icky. If they mention that they've been “tested for everything”. Be sure to mention that they should recheck their results as herpes is not normally included on a standard STI panel and usually you have to specifically request for that test to be run by your doctor.

One Night Stand Scripts

I avoid doing this if either of us are intoxicated and I like to do it prior to leaving the bar or location where I met the person. This still gives them time to make a decision in a less awkward setting of a bedroom. I use the same script as above.

Shana Singleton

Herpes Coach with HSV-1 & HSV-2

Specific Disclosure Videos: [Herpes Goddess Disclosure Tips](#)

Watch all herTikToks Here: [@coachshanasingleton](#)

Instagram: [@shanasingleton](#)

YouTube: [@HerpesHealth&Wellness](#)

Facebook: [@ShanaSingleton](#)

All Other Resources: [Shana Singleton Linktree](#)

Disclosure Tips

1. Someone accepting your herpes status is the **BARE MINIMUM** never settle for someone that you do not like just because they accept your status. They need to accept **ALL** of you or they deserve **NONE** of you.

2. Wait until you are ready to be intimate with someone before you disclose. If you aren't ready to sleep with someone then there is not need to disclose if you are not ready. Establish trust with the person before disclosing medical information.
3. Come to the disclosure conversation with a good positive energy. If you come to the conversation already defeated they will reflect that energy back at you and are more likely to reject you. If you are disclosing in person there are some things to think about:
 - Your posture: are you holding your head up high? Is your back straight or you projecting confidence or are you crumpled in on yourself?
 - Your tone of voice: is it sad and low? Or are you strong, clear and concise?
 - Eye contact: are you looking at the floor? Or are you looking at the person like you would during regular conversation. This is an adult discussion not a confession, treat it that way for better results.
4. Go into the disclosure thinking that they will accept you rather than reject you. Have a "Possibility Mindset" there is just as much of a chance that they have either been with someone with herpes, have it themselves or are open to learning than them automatically rejecting you.
5. Stop using anticipation language. Starting a disclosure with phrases like "I have something to tell you", or "can we talk later" will make the other person expect something bad/wrong and will set the tone of the conversation to be negative. Especially if you are saying this hours or days in advance it's making it seem like this horrible thing that is a HUGE deal.
6. Do not go into a long monologue, trauma dump or make the person feel sorry for you. It may feel like the right time to jump into a long story of how you got herpes or how it affected your life. Try not to do this. Let the person ask questions as they feel fit. Doing this will take away from questions the person should be asking and center the conversation around you. It will also make the person feel less comfortable asking health questions as they do not want to trigger you to feel worse.
7. Do not bombard the person with facts. This will not give the person time to process the fact that you told them you have herpes. This tactic can also come off as if you are persuading or convincing someone to sleep with you rather than letting them make their own decision or come up with and ask their own questions.
8. Stop rejecting yourself for them. Do not say things like "it's okay if you don't want me" as stated above that becomes a self fulfilling prophecy. You are so much more than your herpes status and your worth is not dependent on your STI status.
9. Rejection is not uncommon in dating and herpes is just another potential thing that a partner could reject you for. People get rejected everyday for many different reasons. Do not take it personally if herpes for that one person is a "deal breaker". You are doing the right thing by disclosing to a partner and giving them a choice that you most likely did not get to have. All disclosures are positive disclosures as you are giving opportunity to build trust, open communication and practicing informed consent.

10. A partner needing time is not a bad thing, some people need some time to process or learn about it. HOWEVER, know your worth. They should not be going radio silent or change how they speak to you. They should be asking questions or checking in while doing their research. They should not be rude or treat you differently than before.

This is a video to send to a partner without herpes as what to expect and what they need to know: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/ptXHhFmYXqSQJTdo7>

All Shana Singleton Herpes Disclosure Videos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/j633QCeEuHafAgpZ8>

YoniNutritionist

Adriana has been a sex educator with HSV-1 & HSV-2 for over 20 years!

Specific Disclosure Videos: [YoniNutritionist Disclosure Tips](#)

Watch all her TikToks Here: [@yoninutritionist](#)

Instagram: [@yoninutritionist](#)

YouTube: [@yoninutritionist](#)

All Other Resources: <https://yoninutritionist.com/>

It's not what you say but rather **HOW** you say it!

“Hey before we get sexy I want to have a sexual health conversation just to make sure that we are on the same page as to where we are at and what we are good with. It is important to me to tell you that I live with genital herpes. I have had it for a long time and I am doing everything that I can to manage and prevent it. I rarely get outbreaks anymore and we can still have an amazing sexy time together. I wanted to tell you about it before we get sexy so that you do not find out about it afterwards. I would love to know when was the last time you got tested?”

And then you **STOP** talking. What you are doing here is giving them the facts, you're not getting emotional or you're not information dumping. By leaving it off with a question it gives them the opportunity to think about when the last time THEY were tested because the responsibility isn't all just on you. Give them an opportunity to digest all of that information that you just shared and then if they have any questions you can open up further discussion from there.

Usually for the person on the receiving end of the disclosure it is the first time that they have heard about something like this or they do not know much about it. So their confidence in you is a reflection of how confident you are in yourself. This is why learning more about herpes like how to manage and prevent outbreaks and how to prevent transmission to a partner is so important in building your confidence.

Disclosure Tips

1. It's not what you say, it's how you say it. The more confidence you have the more at ease your partner will be.

2. Decide whether you want to disclose via text, or by having an in-person convo. Disclosing over text can alleviate some of the pressures of an in-person disclosure but it is less personal and the vibe could read differently than intended. You have to decide what is right for you.
3. Learn about herpes! Knowledge is power not only to ease a partner's mind but also to help prevent outbreaks, manage symptoms and help prevent transmission.
4. Allow them to ask questions and be curious. Sometimes this conversation can be awkward and most people know very little about it. By being open and confident they will feel more comfortable talking about it and asking questions.
5. Your partner is only as confident as you are about your herpes status. If you come across self-conscious, insecure or nervous that person will mirror that energy and be much more uneasy about being with you.
6. Do not trauma dump and try to keep emotions to a minimum. Giving too much info may overwhelm your partner and they may lose the important info or be too focused on being emotionally supportive to you to really understand what you are telling them.

Veroventuring

Vero is a herpes advocate with HSV-2!

Specific Disclosure Videos: [Veroventuring Disclosure Tips](#)

Watch all her TikToks Here: [@Veroventuring](#)

Instagram: [@Veroventuring](#)

YouTube: [@Veroventuring](#)

All Other Resources: <https://direct.me/veroventuring>

"I very much enjoyed getting to know one another before any feelings might get involved; I am going to tell you that I have tested positive for herpes and I would like us both to go get tested together to see if you may have anything laying dormant. Once we share our results with each other, if we both feel the desire to continue talking, let's do it!"

The wrong person for you will immediately be defensive and not want to go get tested. The right person will respect you for not only being honest and forthcoming but also that you were responsible enough to get tested and be worried about their partner's health.

u/SurroundWithRight

How To Tell Someone You Have Herpes: Real Disclosure Message Examples

Navigating the early stages of a romantic connection is always a bit nerve-wracking. When you're carrying something as stigmatized as herpes, that anxiety can multiply. One of the hardest parts is figuring out how and when to disclose. Many people wrestle with the question: Should I do it in person? Should I wait longer? What if they reject me?

If you've found yourself Googling "how to tell someone you have herpes over text," you're not alone. It's a deeply vulnerable thing to do. But it can also be one of the most empowering steps you take toward self-acceptance and healthy relationships.

We'll talk about why texting can be a valid, respectful option for herpes disclosure. We'll also break down "herpes disclosure text message examples" and offer real-world inspiration from someone who's been there. If you're unsure how to send a "herpes disclose text," this is for you.

Why Disclosing Over Text Is Valid

There's often a stigma around choosing text as the medium for something "serious." But when it comes to herpes disclosure, text has its advantages:

- It gives the other person time and space to process.
- It allows *you* to express yourself clearly, without the fear or awkwardness that may come up face-to-face.
- It gives both of you a moment to absorb and reflect, which can lead to more thoughtful conversation later.

Choosing text doesn't mean you care less—it means you care enough to do it in a way that supports emotional clarity.

Real-Life Example of a Herpes Disclosure Text

Here's a deeply personal and beautifully written example from someone who shared her herpes status after 4 or 5 meaningful dates. Her message shows that honesty and self-worth can coexist with vulnerability. Her words are courageous, full of care, and a powerful model for anyone wondering *how to tell someone you have herpes over text.*

She Wrote:

"Hey, I've been thinking about this since our last date—things have been going really well between us, and I've genuinely loved getting to know you. I've felt a real connection growing, and before we spend more time together or move toward something more intimate, there's something important I need to share.

I've hinted at some of the difficult things I've experienced in life, and this is a piece of that story. I decided to share it over text—not because I don't respect you or the connection we have, but because this kind of truth takes courage, and sometimes it's easier to find the right words when I have a bit of space to express them thoughtfully.

When I was 16, I was diagnosed with genital HSV-1. It's caused by the same virus that leads to cold sores. It's incredibly common—about 90% of people have HSV-1 orally, and around 20% live with what I have. I've had it for over 11 years now, and I haven't had any symptoms or outbreaks in more than a decade. It's not dangerous, it doesn't affect my health, fertility, or ability to live a full, healthy life—and I've never transmitted it to any of my past partners.

For me, the hardest part wasn't the physical side—it was the emotional weight I carried in the early years. But I've done the work. I've healed, I've learned, and I've grown into someone who leads with honesty and compassion.

I'm telling you this now because I respect you—and because if there's a chance this could become something real, I want it to be built on truth and openness. If we do move forward together, it would simply mean that we'd avoid being intimate if I ever noticed symptoms, which I haven't in a very long time.

I've spoken to doctors over the years who've told me this isn't something typically tested for because it's so common. And based on how long I've had it, the fact that I've been symptom-free, and the lower transmission rate from women to men, the risk of passing it on is very low—less than 1%, in fact.

Still, I want you to feel informed and empowered. More than anything, I want you to know that I care about you. I'm not sharing this because I have to—I'm sharing it because I want to. Because you matter.

I know this might come as a surprise, and I don't expect you to respond right away. Take all the time you need. I'm here for any questions or thoughts you might have.

Why This Herpes Disclose Text Works

This message is a fantastic model for how to tell someone you have herpes over text. Here's why:

1. **It's respectful:** The sender expresses care and honesty without pressure.
2. **It's informative:** Facts are shared about HSV-1, including how common it is and the very low risk of transmission
3. **It's emotionally grounded:** There's vulnerability and self-respect in every line.
4. **It anticipates the receiver's experience:** By acknowledging the other person may need time, it shows empathy.

This is one of the strongest “herpes disclosure text message examples” because it's not just about the diagnosis—it's about **who** you are and the type of connection you want.

More Herpes Disclosure Text Message Examples

Here are a couple of shorter variations you can adapt:

****Example 1:****

“Hey, I wanted to share something important before we get more serious. I have genital HSV-1. I've had it for years without symptoms, and the risk of passing it is very low, especially when managed. I'm telling you because I respect you and want to be upfront. If you have questions or need space to think, I completely understand.”

****Example 2:****

“This isn’t easy to say, but I believe in honesty. I have herpes (HSV-1 genitally). It doesn’t affect my health or life much, and I haven’t had outbreaks in years. I wanted you to know so you can make an informed choice. No pressure—just openness.”

What If They Don’t Respond Well?

Let’s be honest—there’s always a risk. But how someone responds to your truth tells you **everything** about who they are. You’re not looking for someone who stays despite herpes—you’re looking for someone who sees **you** beyond it.

If someone reacts negatively, it’s okay to grieve. But don’t internalize shame. People walk away from potential relationships all the time for all sorts of reasons. That doesn’t diminish your worth.

Rejection is not proof of unworthiness. It’s just one person’s decision, based on their own limits, fears, and baggage. Someone walking away doesn’t mean you are unlovable. It doesn’t mean your condition makes you unclean or undeserving. It means they were not equipped to hold your truth with the care it deserved. That’s not a flaw in you. It’s a limitation in them.

It’s a filter process now. And honestly? That’s a **good** thing. The people who stick around after you disclose? Those are the real ones. Confidence is key. You want someone who’s mature enough to handle it.

And listen, if you’re feeling down or discouraged, it’s **totally okay** to try dating people who already get it. When you’re with someone who **gets it**, you don’t have to explain or defend yourself. You can just **be**. And honestly? Sites like [PositiveSingles] (https://www.positivesingles.com/?tid=af20038118_ra) and [MPWH] (<https://www.mpwh.com/?tid=af8045383>) can be a safe space to feel seen, valued, and sexy without the stigma. Having great sex with someone who values you and isn’t phased by your status? Whew—it can rebuild your confidence **fast**. You’ll remember real quick that you’re still desirable, still fire, still **THAT** girl.

You don’t have to limit yourself to them forever. When you feel ready, you can absolutely get back into the regular dating pool—there are plenty of people out there who won’t see herpes as a dealbreaker.

This diagnosis doesn’t mean your love life is over—it just means it’s evolving.

Knowing how to tell someone you have herpes over text is a skill that blends vulnerability, maturity, and compassion. Sending a thoughtful “herpes disclose text” is a brave and beautiful act. And if they’re the right person, they’ll see the courage behind your words—not just the content.

https://www.reddit.com/r/Herpes_Support_Growth/s/5arEKRCwpD

LostToLimits

Lana is a female transformation coach with HSV-2. She offers coaching in many areas and most of her social medias have a specific playlist for herpes content.

Specific Disclosure Videos: [Lana's Disclosure Tips](#)

Watch all her TikToks Here: [@losttolimitless](#)

Instagram: [@lana.linge](#)

All Other Resources: [Snipfeed Lanalinge](#)

Disclosure Tips

1. The timeline can look differently depending on the relationship. I like to disclose when I feel that I am ready to have a physical relationship with them. So whenever I feel ready to become physically intimate with a partner is when I start to disclose.
2. Avoid having this conversation in the heat of the moment and make the time and space to have it when both parties are not distracted or overwhelmed. You want them to be thinking with the “correct head”.
3. Speaking from a place of confidence and self-acceptance. It is important to go into a disclosure not seeking acceptance or approval from someone else but being comfortable with yourself and your status. Rejection can sting or hurt but at the end of the day it shouldn't change the way that you feel about yourself at all.
4. The sex talk shouldn't be a confession, it should be an adult conversation between two people who want to get physically intimate. The talk should not only include you sharing your herpes status but also cover things like general STD testing, and pregnancy prevention as well.

Disclosure Script

You: “Hey, are you ready to have the sex talk?”

Partner: “Sex talk? Oh yeah I'm ready”

You: “Ok so I need to disclose to you that I have HSV and this is how I plan to protect you because protecting you and your health is my number one priority. So I have had this virus for ____ years so at this point I am very familiar with my body and I am able to tell if and when an outbreak is coming on. So I would make sure if I had an outbreak we would abstain from sex during or around that time period. So usually I can sense it coming a day or two before and I also like to give a safety window after an outbreak just to make sure we are in the clear before we engage in any physical activity. I haven't actually had an outbreak in ____ amount of time and I take antivirals daily as an added precaution. I would also prefer it if we used condoms just as an additional layer of protection for you as well as me. (I say this especially if we are not exclusive) Do you have any questions for me?”

Leave it open for any questions they may have. I also after this conversation talk about the importance of STD testing and how we both should still be getting tested to make sure that

neither person contracts or has a different STI. I will also bring up birth control and pregnancy protection at this time as well.

u/Less_Holiday-3974

Confidence + Conversation = Success!

This is a long post, but please keep reading if you are upset about your diagnosis, spiraling about your future love life, or struggling with disclosure:

Hi everyone-- I am a 24 male and was diagnosed with GHSV-1 almost a year ago. Over this past year I have really struggled with it mentally, spiraled endlessly about being rejected and my dating life being over, gone to therapy, talked to friends and family about it, and then took a pause from dating to work on myself, focus on my job, and train for a marathon. I also took a several month break from looking at this sub, which subconsciously was feeding negative scenarios into my mind (not blaming anyone, but that's the reality of many posts on this sub as people are looking for support).

Over the past month I regained enough confidence to re-enter the dating scene, asked several people out in person, went on several first/second dates, and recently had seen someone on two dates who I was really interested in and attracted to. She's an amazing girl and really smart and open minded, so that gave me some confidence already. I was freaking out on how to disclose on the third date, which was dinner and chess at my apartment, and this is how it went.

After dinner, we sat on my couch and were chatting a bit and I brought up the conversation as so when there was a natural pause in our talking:

Me.- "Hey, just wanted to say that I really like you and have really enjoyed hanging out and think you're really cool."

Her: "me too!"

Me: ".. and I'm excited to take things further physically if you are too but before I want to discuss sexual health if that's cool with you"

Her: "Sure!... that sounds like a great idea.. I dated xyz xyz months ago and was tested recently and negative for everything etc. Etc."

Me- "Cool, yeah I've also been tested recently and was negative for everything, I do know I have HSV-1 which is something that is not tested for usually. Are you familiar with that?"

Her-"No"

Me- "So it's what causes cold sores, if you've seen people with cold sores before?"

Her- "yes"

Me- "yeah well most people have it, and a lot of people are asymptomatic so they don't know, some people get it around their mouth, and I've gotten sores once below my waist. It was about a year ago, and since then I haven't had any other outbreaks and it doesn't affect my health. It's a very low chance of passing it on especially with protection, but wanted to let you know and give you space to think about it and ask any questions if you want"

Her- "no, that sounds good to me, thanks for telling me, I trust you"

We even ended up having sex that night because she trusted me so much after I had brought up the discussion of sexual health and she felt so comfortable! And it seems like there will be more dates to come, and who knows, maybe a relationship in the future!

To sum it up, here would be my advice for people struggling with disclosure:

- 1. Confidence and composure are key!** Bring it up in a private setting, and recognize that the reason you are bringing this up is because you might have sex and someone else is attracted to the amazing things you bring to the table, and hopefully can look past something as minor as herpes. If you freak out or act negatively, they will too. If you mention it as no big deal (which it's not lol), they will likely mirror your reaction.
- 2. MAKE IT A CONVERSATION!** I cannot stress this enough... This is not a confession! This is literally something most people have. Sexual health conversations are things that all consenting adults should be having... yes, I got away with skipping it too in the past, but trust me it makes everyone involved so much more comfortable and establishes trust.
- 3. Put yourself out there!** There are tons of people having successful experiences like mine that just don't end up on this subreddit because they don't need support anymore. It's scary, I also didn't have any IRL friends who have had to go through this, but by taking some time and talking with those close to me I've been able to make my own guide on how to handle this.

You are all amazing people, and doing the right first step, which is recognizing the importance of disclosure. It will work out in the end, just have patience and confidence... It took me 9 months to figure it out. I'm sure that I may face a rejection in the future, but those people aren't meant to be anyways or are too close-minded/immature for my liking 🙌

Good luck and take care of yourselves. Go outside and live your life! ❤️

<https://www.reddit.com/r/HSVpositive/s/VBTYBMgLu8>

u/Particular_Ebb

I Have A Strong Sex Life Regardless Of My Diagnosis

I couldn't find anyone I liked in my area on Positive Singles. So I decided to get on Tinder last month. I would disclose my diagnosis in my profile and maybe I would get a dozen people to like me, over several months, and probably a few who have HSV themselves but are afraid to disclose. Then I would go from there and see who I could date.

Ya'll...my mind is blown! I have over 2,250 likes (and growing) on Tinder. I disclosed my diagnosis in my profile in the very first paragraph. I didn't go into details about it, but I said I have HSV-2...look it up. When anyone contacts me, the first thing I ask is did you read my profile and when they say yes, I say are you good with everything?

They will either say yes or they will ask me questions about it. They all love that I am direct and honest and they see me as a good and kind person because of it. And that's what most single men are looking for. Honesty and kindness. (And good sex with confidence.)

So, I can go on any date without feeling guilty. And I never bring it up again or talk about it after the initial conversation. So, it feels like I'm living a normal life again. I write this to encourage all of you out there to not let this stop you from having a good time.

Also, are there still dicks on Tinder? Of course. But most of the dicks swipe left anyway if they don't like my profile. I've only had one dude say he just wanted me to give him blowjobs. And I said no. That was the end of that.

The man I'm with now is absolutely gorgeous. He is 6'3, muscular, tan, kind-hearted, intelligent, and looks like a young Tom Cruise.

Tell the Universe what you want. Ask and it shall be given to you. We co-create our own destinies. Stay in joy and love yourself. The Universe is always reflecting back the energy that you put out.

Start expecting the Universe to bring us a cure soon. Act as if it's already here to have it manifest into reality. Love you all. We got this! 🙌🙌

https://www.reddit.com/u/Particular_Ebb_747/s/Xd21msyb3X

u/LugoLove

My Personal Dating Rules of Thumb (when I was single)

- Date people you are interested in, attracted to.
- Don't project the future with someone you just met. You have no idea who they are. That is why you date. In other words, do not become emotionally attached. They are not perfect for you. You couldn't possibly know that.
- Nothing stinks worse than desperation. Don't be desperate.

- Don't date anyone because they seem like they are desperate enough to date you. You are not chopped liver.
- Disclose if, after the second date, you want to see each other again. So disclose before the 3rd date.
- If you can tell they are "over the moon", completely gaga, after the first date, disclose before the 2nd date. Treat that person how you'd like to be treated.
- Educate yourself so you can give the disclosure talk with accurate information.
- Don't try to minimize herpes by using terms that don't make it clear, or obscure, it is herpes and there is currently no cure. They must know there are no guarantees.
- If this person does not have herpes, as validated by a test, always take your antivirals to minimize the risk.
- Don't keep apologizing for having herpes. That gets old and starts sounding like you are not emotionally ready to date. You aren't looking for a savior, you're looking for a potential partner and some mind blowing sex.
- If you start getting the jitters about having the disclosure talk, practice with a friend.
- Always remember, you bring just as much to the relationship table as anyone else.
- You are not damaged goods. Never let anyone treat you as less than, or lucky to date them because they accepted your herpes. That's the beginning of an abusive relationship.
- Anatomy of dating: Dates 1 thru 6 are just look-sees. There's spark and interest, but it's not a relationship. If you make it to date 7, and there is mutual agreement to become exclusive, then you're dating. (Remember that was my personal code).
- Always follow up the disclosure with an email or text so you have proof you disclosed.

Source:

https://www.reddit.com/r/Herpes/comments/lqk196/my_personal_dating_rules_of_thumb_when_i_was/

u/Absoluteduo23456

How do I disclose having herpes to my partner?

There is no guarantee that what we do or say will bring an understanding smile or a happy outcome.

But there are ways to make it easier for the other person to accept the reality of the situation.

Basically, the core idea is: don't cheat, don't hide, and try to manage the other person's misunderstandings and prejudices. I just have herpes, so I am still in control.

Don't say how you contracted genital herpes, say what genital herpes is.

- Tell the person some scientific medical facts. For example, what is HSV, what is the herpes virus, and how is it transmitted? These words are really alarming when they come out, but the information behind these words is very useful.
- It's a lot smarter to get the facts out and tell the person what the genital herpes virus is than to come up to them and say, "I accidentally got infected by someone I was having sex with."
- "This kind of factual opening will focus the person's attention on the fact that genital herpes is really just a skin problem."

Don't assume that just because other people have heard of genital herpes they really know (understand) genital herpes.

For some basic questions like the prevalence of the herpes virus, are oral herpes and genital herpes are contagious to each other, etc., choose 4-5 key facts and keep them in mind, it will keep you and the other person grounded.

Don't just tell the person that you have genital herpes, but also tell them how you are treating your herpes virus.

If you've done the first two, you're already halfway there, the next thing you need to do is to tell the person how you're being proactive and tell them that these are efforts you're making to prevent recurrences. For example, exercising, boosting the immune system, taking vitamins, or taking suppressive therapies, and more importantly, letting them know that by taking these positive actions, we are also doing our part to protect others.

Don't sing a monologue, create a dialog.

Since genital herpes is a very common virus, your partner has likely heard that the chances of people around her/him having the infection are still high. If this is the case, then it is a good entry point to start a conversation with the person about genital herpes to know how much she/he knows about the virus, what her/his views are, etc.

- After you inform them that you have the genital herpes virus, try asking some questions: do you know anyone else who is infected/ carrying this virus? Or have you heard of anyone infected with this virus? Have you ever socialized with someone with the herpes virus before? And so on.
- Make sure you can have big and accurate enough information to give the person a sense of security when being honest with them. For conversations with this kind of content seem to be awkward, but it's actually a turning point because regardless of whether or not you and your partner are going to have further intimacy after this, notice that you're genuinely, honestly, communicating about this stuff that you wouldn't normally discuss on a date

Don't feel ashamed! Be confident!

At the same time, we need to know. As long as there is an intimate relationship there is a chance of being infected. Whether it's with a boyfriend, with a girlfriend, with a stranger, for the first time, for the 100th time, with protection, or without protection, all of these situations, the risk of contracting genital herpes exists.

We are not being alarmist or bringing despair, this is the truth. We need to stick to that and hope that the person we are with can do the same.

- There is a "seven percent rule" when it comes to communicating with people, which means that only 7% of a conversation is actually verbal, while the remaining 93% is non-verbal, such as body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, volume of voice, body posture, and so on.
- What you say is important, how you say it is even more important. Look the other person in the eye and make eye contact. Your attitude is important. As you express your own feelings, it's also how you see yourself. Remember you are not begging the other person to accept herpes.

Finally, to summarize, you could start like this:

- "We've been on two dates now, and there's something I'd like to talk to you about; I have a skin problem that breaks out once in a while when my immune system is low."
- "This skin problem is genital herpes, which you may have heard of, but I'm guessing you don't know much about it."
- "I have tried suppressive therapy to prevent recurrences, specifically, I would take anti-viral medication every day to keep this virus at bay."
- "It's a very common virus, one in six Americans carries it, and over 400 million people worldwide carry it, so maybe you know someone who has it?"
- That's pretty much the structure, feel free to give each other all the science you know, and remember, don't be a crybaby, the sky isn't falling.

Good luck!

<https://www.reddit.com/r/Herpes/s/l45cM3gn3E>

u/featsofclay89

Disclosure Tips

Disclosure of HSV status can be scary and intimidating. For me, it's gotten easier with experience. After discussion in the comments section of another post, I thought it might be useful to put this all out there as a full post. For reference, I'm a woman in my 40s.

Disclosure does get easier! I've disclosed privately and publicly. I'm an extrovert, and comfortable talking about having HSV-2, so I do. I don't expect everyone to feel comfortable disclosing, so I try to speak up so that others know they aren't alone, and to help decrease the stigma.

Three things are helpful for my own disclosure process.

First, I have a note saved on my phone with the basic script I give people, and it gets edited slightly depending on who I'm talking with. I'll include the script below.

Second, I try to get it out of the way as early as possible, and never in the heat of the moment. I want someone to know and have time to digest the info before lust decreases brain function. It's a consent piece for me.

Third is the hardest but so important. I try not to get attached before having disclosed. It's a lot easier for me to respect and honor someone else's choice to move on, when I'm not already deeply invested. To that end, I tend to list my HSV-2+ status on my dating profile.

After a year-long relationship ended recently, I started dating and hooking up again. I'd made a brand new dating profile and forgot to include HSV. I was getting ready to go out with a guy I'd been really excited to meet in person, and I realized my habits were dusty and I hadn't disclosed. I brought HSV up immediately. He was really unsure if he'd want to be physical and I was starting to feel rejected.

Then I remembered that it is not **ME** that's being rejected, it's someone making an informed decision about their risks and what risks they're willing to take part in. I was never disclosed to, so wasn't treated with the kind of respect that allowed me to make my own choice. I will never do that to anyone else. Turns out after a couple dates, he's not so unsure after all! Education helps end the stigma.

I've disclosed a lot over the past 4 years. I've only had a few people decide not to meet up. Because I treated them with respect, they treat me with respect too. I've found that most people really appreciate clear and honest communication. It helps build trust, which is pretty important to building strong relationships.

My script that I used in the above situation:

I'm realizing that I've forgotten to let you know something. It's not typically been a big deal to people, but I wouldn't feel right without an overt discussion.

I've got HSV-2, for which I take daily antivirals to limit its risk of spreading to others. I've never had an outbreak and have been on medication for it for 3.5 years so probably won't ever have an outbreak. 80% of people with HSV-2 don't have outbreaks. Taking the antivirals and using condoms is quite effective at limiting risk to others, though because condoms don't cover everything there's still some risk (around 1%). Just something to bring up so you're aware.

Not that I was expecting anything, but I do want to be really direct about this. Then you can make your own judgment calls, while not in the heat of the moment.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/Herpes/s/ONyDMMewbt>

u/Affectionate_Run74

A Guide to Disclosure

Hi guys! I've seen a lot of people ask how to disclose, for a script, etc. I know it seems very scary but I've had many positive experiences in this realm thus far so I wanted to share my structure to it in case it helps anyone else feel a little more confident.

I usually am just straight up and blunt about it, and I've had an extremely high success rate. I define success in a disclosure as a calm, mature conversation in which everyone is comfortable and respectful. Success does not mean convincing them to sleep with you, that's not the goal. You aren't convincing, you're informing. Some of my best disclosures have ended in the person respectfully declining, and that's OKAY because it was a good conversation and we were all comfortable with the outcome.

In my experience the recipe to success is:

STAY COMPLETELY CALM AND FACTUAL

The bigger deal you make about it, the more freaked out they'll get. If you can just talk about it maturely, it won't seem as scary and they'll react a lot better. They don't wanna see emotional baggage, they just want the reality of the situation. Easier said than done, I know, but the more you do it, and the more informed and comfortable you are with your diagnosis, the easier it gets, I promise.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

As someone with HSV unfortunately it is your responsibility to know what it means for you and others around you and often that requires educating potential partners. If you're gonna sleep with someone you need to be prepared to answer their questions about it... **TRUTHFULLY** and **INFORMED**. Not speculation, not "I thinkkkkk it's okay", not avoidant, not saying "there's no risk it's fine if we use a condom". No excuses, you **NEED** to know your shit, or else you are not giving the person an opportunity for truly informed consent.

Almost everyone I've disclosed to simply didn't know much about it at all. (I truly believe the stigma largely comes from a general lack of info and knowledge.) Every disclosure I've had has led to a mature discussion in which I answered all their questions, and they became increasingly calm about it once they learned more.

AS FOR A SCRIPT:

As I said, I'm blunt. I don't sugar coat, dance around it, or anything of the sort. People respect it much more when you just cut to the chase.

I start off by saying ***“hey, before this goes further we need to talk about something.”*** This gets their attention, they say something like ***“ok, what’s up?”***

I just ripped off the bandaid. I take a deep breath and just say it.

“So I have HSV (herpes)”

I like to lead with HSV bc herpes seems like a dirty word, but also some people jump to HIV, so honestly, the herpes clarification is often necessary. You could say HSV (Herpes simplex Virus). Then I’ll specify the type I have, and where. I only have GHSV-2 not Oral so I always note that.

Then depending on how the convo goes I will hit the following points. Usually I hit this order but it can vary as the convo flows naturally. I always hit all these points before it’s over tho because they are all important:

- A. “I am on the meds, haven’t had an OB in X amount of time, I’m doing everything I can to be safe in order to reduce the risk of transmission, however there’s always a chance. Due to my suppressive therapy it’s very small, but I’m not gonna pretend there isn’t”

If you’re not on the meds, just be honest about what you’re doing to manage it. But it’s important to tell them if you are or aren’t, and also how long it’s been since your last outbreak.

- B. ***“I know this sucks, it’s a lot to take in. But I’d like to talk about this with you and what this means for our situation.”***

Acknowledge the shock of it, let them react, but stay calm, and make it clear this is an invitation to discuss, not a shut out or a bomb drop.

- C. ***“I’m happy to answer all your questions, the good bad and ugly, and I can point you towards more resources if you’d like”***

This is their chance to ask you about it. At this point I’ll just be brutally honest and tell them all the dirty truths, I’ve already told them I have herpes LOL. I’ve been asked personal things like “what does that look like for you” and just factual things like what the risk looks like.

- C.1. I’ll be sure to tell them the full risk factors such as the fact that it sheds skin to skin, and condoms aren’t as effective for HSV as they are for other things. This is important.
- C.2. I’ll also throw in some anecdotal stories to lessen the doomsday vibe, that plenty of couples have been together for years and years and didn’t transmit it because they didn’t have sex during an OB, and how some people are asymptomatic, how it can be dormant for years, etc. How being relatively healthy helps with management, etc.

C.3. Again, I'm not convincing anyone of anything. I'm not trying to sugar coat it, nor scare them. I'm just saying the reality of it. In my situation it's unlikely, you're probably fine, but I'm not gonna tell you it's impossible because that's just not true.

D. *"You don't have to make any decisions now. I just know I needed to tell you, and give you the power to make your own choice, and I'm here to discuss if you need but ultimately I'll respect your choice either way"*

This is the most important part. You make sure they know you care and that's why you're telling them, you make sure that they know they have the power to make whatever choice, and that you'll respect them if they respect you. They may need time. Leave your line open, make yourself available as a resource.

At this point it can go a few different ways but by using this structure I've gotten the following responses:

- "Thank you for telling me. I really appreciate it because a lot of people don't tell"
- "Okay cool thanks for letting me know but I still wanna fuck" at which point I triple check they're **SURE** before proceeding
- "I appreciate you telling me but this is a lot to take in and I think I need to think about it" at which point I say "of course, take all the time you need and I'm happy to answer any further questions but I respect it either way"
- "Damn that sucks for you. Thanks for telling me but I'm good, best of luck". A rejection yes. But respectful. And they have every right to say no.

And if you get a truly gross reaction from someone, **THEY'RE NOT WORTH YOUR TIME ANYWAYS**. Any good person, even if shocked or concerned or grossed out, will still have an ounce of respect towards you and if they don't and treat you differently, they are just not a kind person. Even if a good person was super against it, they'll likely still say something like **"yeahhh okay I'm sorry but I'm not interested"**. Which sucks, but it's still respectful.

Ultimately I like to just be as educated and calm as possible, and make sure the person knows that they're in control, and I've never had a bad experience and I've done this many times now.

It gets easier I promise.

One last line to leave you with, ***"I didn't get the choice whether I exposed myself to HSV, and I don't want to put anyone else in that position"***. Honest, but shows you care, and works every time.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/Herpes/s/8jcEx2hJFV>

u/Imaginary_Salary0718

I share my status with everyone and on my dating app profiles I state I have genital herpes.

Some folks ask if I'm joking, some people have it too saying I'm brave to disclose (I don't agree about the bravery I just think I have nothing to hide), some act hostile and some are curious.

One person from an app asked me "You're very cute but I will say the prospect of herpes does concern me - how do you navigate physical intimacy?" I responded "I do take antiviral meds and always use protection, if I feel like I'm going to have a flare up I abstain from sex all together. I haven't had any issues with previous lovers, men or women" they said "thanks for being so earnest, I appreciate that, I'm still very scared of the idea of herpes" they said they are still interested in getting to know me and I responded "I don't think I'll be able to connect with someone who views a condition I will have for the rest of my life as something that makes them uncomfortable" they were understanding saying "That's articulately kind of you too share - Likewise, & if I see you around the scene I would still love to say hi!"

I feel like I'm being crazy or closed off. but when they express their fear around something that I cannot change, and, of course I don't want to afflict them; as I haven't with previous lovers. Getting with someone isn't my ultimate goal but if someone is afraid to be with me what are we doing? In the past when I've disclosed to people its like really positive perhaps because they have done research on HSV or have already interacted with someone with it but it irked me how this person talked to me.. it's not a big deal but like if you think on an aesthetic or personal level I'm attractive and beneath that I'm gross - I'm good ! bye bye.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/Herpes/s/ETgUkBdoSa>

u/heyYaNo

How I Like To Disclose My HSV-2

I'm a 36-year-old woman living in Los Angeles, and I was diagnosed with HSV2 six years ago. When I first found out, I honestly thought my dating and sex life were over. I felt ashamed, afraid, and certain no one would ever want me again. Like many of us do, I went down a deep internet rabbit hole searching for information and hope. At first, what I found only made me feel worse—until I discovered [@safe.slut](#) on Instagram. Her content helped me reconnect with my confidence and sexuality. Through her page, I found a whole community of people openly sharing their HSV experiences, which made me feel far less alone.

After about a year, I finally felt ready to try dating again. I started with the Positive Singles app, and while it was initially a relief to connect with others who understood, I quickly grew frustrated. The free version was so limited, and the paid options were expensive—it felt like they were taking advantage of people at one of the most vulnerable points in their lives. So, I deleted my account and decided to try good old Tinder 😊.

I won't lie—those early conversations were nerve-wracking. Whenever things started to turn flirty or sexual, I'd panic because I knew it meant disclosure time. My first few attempts were clumsy and awkward, and a few people unmatched me afterward. It definitely stung, but eventually, I realized I hadn't been that into them anyway. So instead of seeing those moments as rejection, I started using them as practice. Each time, I learned a little more about how to

communicate openly and confidently. Over time, I found a way to disclose that felt natural and true to me—and I even got comfortable enough to do it in person.

Now, when I disclose, I like to bring up sexual health and STI status early on. It's a conversation that should happen regardless of HSV, and as someone who practices ethical non-monogamy (ENM), I take STI transparency seriously. It also tells you a lot about who you're dealing with—because you want to be with people who care about their own health and yours.

I usually disclose via text so it's not in the heat of the moment, though I've done it both ways. The most important thing is to approach it with confidence—no shame, no apologies. It's not your fault.

"I want to talk about our STI status before things move forward. When was the last time you got tested, and what were your results? I get tested regularly, but I also want to share that I have HSV. I've had it for a long time and I know my body well enough to recognize when it's not safe for me to have sex. Condoms are the best way to reduce risk, though like with any STI, nothing is 100%. I wanted to bring this up now so you'd have time to think about it, rather than putting you on the spot in the moment. You don't need to give me an answer right away—take your time, ask questions, do your research. And if it's something you're not comfortable with, I completely respect you for taking care of yourself."

Since using this approach, I've had about a 98% success rate. It's helped me find better-quality partners who value honesty, communication, and care. If you're newly diagnosed, I know it might feel like your world has fallen apart—but I promise, it truly does get better.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/HSVpositive/s/LksbnyeaVF>

u/Excellent_Nothing_86

How I Disclosed My Genital HSV-1 Successfully

I met my ex in the wild. I disclosed my status after he expressed interest in me, but before I agreed to a first date. We ended up in a loving relationship for over 5 years. He remained HSV- but accepted the risk.

My disclosure was simply: "I have type 1 hsv."

My responses to his follow-up questions are copy/ paste below.

In 2017, I met someone in the wild. I normally don't entertain wildlife, because I prefer to date those who are already in the club. However, this particular feral human insisted on giving me a sniff.

I didn't waste any time or mince my words. Before I agreed to a first date, and before I even engaged in much of a conversation (beyond introducing ourselves and just being generally friendly to each other)

I told him via very simply via text:

I have type 1 HSV.

He proceeded to google and responded:

Oh. Herpes?

This began our first (of many) conversations about me being HSV1+

He appreciated my openness and honesty, so he wanted to get to know me more. I guess he liked what he sniffed and felt safe to proceed. We were together for over 5 years and had a rich, loving relationship.

I took antivirals every day, and he remained HSV- while being with me. He had concerns about it in the beginning, but stopped thinking about it all together after probably about a year into our relationship. It became a non-issue for him.

The following are copy paste of messages I sent following the initial disclosure. For context - he asked if I got cold sores. He expressed interest in learning more. He talked about getting tested.

-
- I have type 1 hsv
 - For me it's genital
 - I'm really open about it, so can ask me anything
 - I just like to get it out there, easier that way
 - Standard STI (or STD) panels don't test for herpes, many people don't realize this.
 - When you do research, which I encourage you to do, make sure you're finding recent stuff, just because some stuff out there is outdated.
 - I want you to understand it for yourself, not just take my word on everything. and I want you to feel comfortable/confident in your choices.
 - The problem is, nobody can guarantee that you won't get it from me (assuming you haven't already been exposed).
 - If you weren't exposed and had a vaccine, well wouldn't that be nice.
 - If I had some sort of indicator that said I was shedding the virus, that would be great. but that doesn't exist, unfortunately.
 - If that ever becomes a problem for you, just tell me.
 - I don't see my herpes as a measure of my value, so it won't offend me. So just know that you can always be open and honest with me about it, and I won't take it personally.

https://www.reddit.com/r/HSVpositive/comments/1egyqkj/how_i_disclosed_my_genital_hsv1_successfully/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=web3x&utm_name=web3xcss&utm_term=1&utm_content=share_but_ton

u/SuccotashSimilar8275

Life After HSV: Dating Isn't Over

I was diagnosed with HSV-2 a year ago and thought it was the end of the world, that it would ruin my dating life and that I would be forever alone. It hasn't. I've disclosed to three partners: one I've known for 20+ years, another 5+ years, and the most recent I met on Hinge over a month prior to disclosing. All were positive responses. I usually get to know someone first, then disclose when feelings start developing and it is evident things may lead somewhere physical.

For the last one, in our early convos I made a pic of a list of 20+ dealbreakers (including STDs) using ChatGPT and asked them to pick his top 5.

27 Relationship DEALBREAKERS



- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Dishonesty / Hiding Important Info | 15. Children from a Previous Relationship |
| 2. Lack of Accountability | 16. Previously Divorced |
| 3. Repeated Infidelity | 17. Substance Abuse Issues |
| 4. Manipulative Behavior | 18. Having an STD/STI |
| 5. Disrespect Toward Me or Others | 19. Incompatible Long-Term Goals |
| 6. Cruelty or Lack of Empathy | 20. Long-Distance Relationship |
| 7. Racist / Discriminatory Beliefs | 21. Major Religious Differences |
| 8. Uncontrolled Anger | 22. Not Respecting Boundaries |
| 9. Avoiding Difficult Conversations | 23. Pressuring Me Sexually |
| 10. Emotional Unavailability | 24. Poor Hygiene / Neglecting Self-Care |
| 11. Dismissing My Feelings | 25. Always Disheveled Appearance |
| 12. Refusal to Grow or Self-Reflect | 26. Excessive Use of Profanity |
| 13. Inability to Apologize | 27. Financial Irresponsibility |
| 14. Immature Conflict Resolution | |

They actually picked 10, and having an STD wasn't one. That gave me so much reassurance about eventually disclosing.

For those who may be wondering, I initiated my disclosure by asking about their sexual health, when was their last STD panel and the results. They told me and then I responded with:

“Thanks for being open. My last full panel about a year ago came back negative, but I do have HSV-2. It’s really common, and I take a daily pill to keep the risk of transmission very low. It’s mainly contagious during an outbreak, which I rarely have on the medication. I like being upfront before things progress so you can make your own informed decision, a privilege I didn’t get. I’m happy to answer any questions, and if this makes you uncomfortable, I completely understand.”

Since disclosure, my relationship and sex life has been relatively normal, using the necessary precautions: condoms, antivirals, and avoiding sex during active outbreaks.

HSV doesn’t define you. It just means being mindful, and the right people will respect that. ❤️

<https://www.reddit.com/r/HSVpositive/s/mf6sBzpkSw>

u/Kshimochi

Disclosure success story! Disclosure text message included.

Hi - wanted to share a success story disclosing to a potential romantic partner. Sorry in advance for the long read.

For context I was diagnosed with HPV in 2018 and again in 2020 (have not cleared it yet) and GHSV-1 in April 2025. I contracted it from my ex-boyfriend who would get cold sores from time to time. I’m single now, and 2 weeks ago I started talking to someone new on Bumble. We really hit it off, but wouldn’t be able to meet IRL for another 2 months because he’ll be visiting family for a while. We spoke on the phone / FaceTimed ~8 times before he brought up the possibility of flying to see me earlier than he expected. I felt this was now the appropriate time to tell him about my status, since he was now planning to spend time/money to come see me.

My disclosure text was as follows:

Yes I’m open to any weekend! There’s something I have to bring up before you buy your ticket though.. I wanted to let you know that I have GHSV-1 and HPV- both I got while in relationships. Neither of them affect my life very much, if anything they’ve made me even more conscious of eating healthy and staying active. That said, I would understand if this is something you need to think about. Let me know if you want to talk about this more and what it actually means. I just wanted to let you know now before we plan anything further!

After sending this text I was like- alright either he’s fine with it or he’s not. It’s out of my control.

He replied back. He was appreciative that I was honest. We spoke on the phone and I told him how these things affect me and a bit about how it spreads. We ended that call a little open ended- he said he wanted to think about it more and he wanted more information.

At this point- I thought about sending him all the facts and figures. All the scary statistics that don’t really make sense. All the conflicting information about passing rates, likelihood of contraction, likelihood of showing symptoms. I did a lot of math. As I tried to “gather information”

for him, it just made my head spin and I started to feel worse and worse when I was feeling fine before.

Amid my spiral, I decided to call my mom. She told me the truth is- everyone has these things. This is the reality of dating over 30. He probably already has both of these and doesn't know it. We can't live in fear of passing it on, we have to focus on the pursuit of love and connection that everyone deserves.

Later he and I had another call, but this time more of a discussion about the risks of sex in general. I told him just how many people I know who have this- including my own parents, a few cousins, 1/2 of my female friends either have type 1 or 2. All 3 of my ex-boyfriends had oral type 1. We talked about the realities of dating over 30, and if it's not me, it will be some other woman who doesn't even know she has it passing it on. Something like 90+% of people who have HSV don't even know they have it and still spread it. At least I know I have it and can take anti-virals. After all that explanation- the guy just goes "oh yeah, I also get cold sores all the time. I'm still interested in dating you." And then we proceeded to plan our trip and he booked his flight.

TLDR; Moral of the story- don't give up hope. Mature people understand that sex is never 100% without its risks. My other friends who are positive have had the same experience with their past hookups and boyfriends. If you feel like you're alone, you're not. Discourse is the antidote to stigma. Usually the response I get from others when I tell them is either curiosity or "hey, I have that too!".

Having support from the community definitely gave me confidence to disclose with more ease and self-assurance. Hope this story helps bring a little hope for those who are afraid to disclose and get back into dating.

<https://www.reddit.com/r/HSVpositive/s/OQ6C5eDSQH>

u/AdRich3097

My Disclosure... It Does Get Better!

I (36 female) wanted to share my disclosure that I commented on another post and offer some words of encouragement.

I have been GHSV-2 positive for 14 years and **IT DOES GET BETTER!** It gets easier and less impactful on your life with time. Time, education, and self-acceptance are key to navigating herpes.

Here is my disclosure:

When I first started disclosing I would do it over text because it helped with the rejection and I also think it gives people space to respond, but as I gained confidence I now do it in person - both are okay. I try not to rush the disclosure and wait until it feels organic, typically when the conversation turns to sex or u get the vibe its going in that direction its time for the conversation. each conversation and response will be different so remain calm and open to their response.

I start by affirming im interested in them and having sex with them, then say something along the lines of

"I practice safe and consensual sex and think it's important to have conversations around safe sex with my partners so I want to disclose that im HSV-2 positive, do u know what that is?"

I intentionally say "HSV-2 positive" because "genital herpes" invokes an emotional response.

If the response is yes or often people respond with **"herpes???"**

Then I say:

"Yes, great! I'm glad you know. Are you familiar with herpes or do you have questions I can answer about it?"

If they start asking questions, that's great! You are opening dialogue and it allows space for education (see next paragraph) and vulnerability. If they have no questions, then u can ask if they are comfortable and consent to sex, if not, then do ur best to not get emotional and thank them for the honesty and move on. If yes, then ask them about their STI history and make sure **YOU** give your consent as well! Then use condoms and have fun!!

If the response is no, they are not familiar with HSV-2, then I go into some education about HSV. This is where I will use the term "genital herpes". I say

"It's commonly known as genital herpes. In my experience, the stigma with herpes is worse than the herpes itself but it's important that you understand what herpes is and the risks associated with it. HSV is herpes simplex virus that causes cold sore outbreaks on the genitals HSV-2 or mouth HSV-1, aka the "common cold sore". HSV-2 is transmitted genital to genital with some cases of genital to mouth transmission, though not common. HSV-1 can transmit mouth to mouth and mouth to genital and genital to mouth and is the most common form of HSV. Transmission occurs through skin to skin contact and is most transmissible 3-7 days before an outbreak, during an outbreak, or with asymptomatic shedding. I take antivirals to help suppress the virus and reduce shedding and outbreaks. Using condoms reduces the risk of transmission but it's not 100%. I'll pause, do you have any questions?"

Again, allow space for their response and an open dialogue. I remain very factual and unemotional when answering questions and most of the time it leads to good conversations and intimacy.

Some additional advice on disclosing:

1. You dont owe anyone an explanation on how u got herpes, only share what ur comfortable with that leads to a productive conversation. but being vulnerable and sharing personal anecdotes is good for a healthy productive conversation

2. If someone blames you or has a bad reaction, end it there. they are not for you.
3. They are not rejecting you, they are rejecting the herpes.
4. It's all or you or none of you. They don't get to pick the pieces they are comfortable with i.e. only have intercourse but no oral (unless thats what u want)
5. Consent is two-way, just cause you have HSV doesn't mean the burden is all on you. They also need to disclose their STI status and have a recent STI panel. If they haven't got one, do it together!
6. Disclosure is trial and error, it takes time to lock it in and it's going to be different with every person.

A herpes diagnosis can feel like the end of the world but I promise it's not. Every conversation is an opportunity to reduce stigma and build confidence. You are a whole, valuable, and beautiful person deserving of love and pleasure! ❤️

<https://www.reddit.com/u/AdRich3097/s/zagnIR4Xp3>

Disclosing for Hook Ups/ One Time Relationships:

Though this may seem daunting and impossible it is actually just as easy if not easier than disclosing to a potential romantic partner. It is much lower stakes being there tends to be much less emotional risk involved. Usually for a hook up/ one night stand or just a fling it is someone you just met whether in person or on a dating app. There is usually very little connection other than a physical attraction and in reality you have no emotional investment in the situation other than being horny and wanting to get laid. Because of this these disclosures tend to be more casual and should be less stressful as if the person rejects you it is not like you have planned a future life out with them as with a potential romantic partner.

It is also important to remember that rejection is simply part of shooting your shot regardless of herpes status. Many people get rejected for reasons that have nothing to do with herpes, especially in hookup situations.

Most of the scripts above will work for either a romantic or hook up disclosure. The most notable difference is **the level of detail**. For a romantic partner you may want to be more open and give more of the back story and the emotional element of the diagnosis. Where for a more casual hook up this is really unnecessary and can even work against you.

If you go into the emotional back story it may lead the person you are disclosing to take a step back and assume that you may want more than a fun night. They may also decide to open up to you on a more emotional level and your fun night of hooking up will turn into an emotional confessional which can be a mood killer.

Your best bet is to keep it short, factual and direct.

Having it in your dating bios, or prompts can be a quick way to weed out people uneducated or not open to having a conversation about herpes. However, this is absolutely not necessary if you are not comfortable sharing it publicly.

Just as with regular disclosures, it is usually best to wait until the topic of sex, hooking up or the invitation to go back to someone's place happens naturally in the conversation. Once that happens you can bring up STI testing, for example:

“Yes Tuesday is a perfect day for me to come over, but before I do can I just ask when was the last time you had a STI panel done, just trying to stay safe out here”

You can then gauge their response, if they seem offended by the question, that can be a red flag. Anyone participating in hook up culture should not be offended if asked about STI testing. Just because you have herpes does not mean that you should be okay with getting any of the other STIs or even a different strain of herpes.

If they respond with:

“I am not sure but I haven’t had any symptoms or anything so I am probably clean”

You can always use this time to educate about STIs in general or to disclose your status.

“A lot of STIs actually don’t have symptoms and can still be transmitted, so I would feel more comfortable if we both got a more recent test before we go any further just to be safe”

OR

“I actually thought the same thing and then I got a blood panel done and it came back positive for HSV so you really never know”

If they have been tested recently you can also use this time to disclose your results:

“Yeah I was tested a month ago and everything came back negative”

Then you can say something like:

“Oh that is cool, I was tested _____ and I have HSV-____ I have had it _____ amount of time and my last outbreak was _____” (you can leave this part out if you had one recently to not add unnecessary concern)

You can add:

“I am on an antiviral that lowers the risk of transmission and we can use condoms to lower the risk even more.”

Always end with a statement that you are open to questions as it gives your potential partner the incentive to continue the conversation and ask questions to help them understand it.

“I know that you may have questions and I can answer anything you want to know about it”.

Even Similiar:

If you want to keep it even more simple and straightforward, when the conversation turns to setting up a time/day of the meet up or when the conversation turns sexual (talking about kinks, preferences etc.) you can say:

“Hey so I cannot wait to see you on ____ but before I come over I just wanted to let you know I have HSV-____, it’s nothing serious. I just like my partners to have all the information before anything happens. If you have questions and I can answer anything you want to know about it”

Take Aways:

As with all hook up / dating culture confidence is key. Most people do not know much about herpes and you are their first exposure to it. If you come off as nervous or freaked out then they will mirror that emotion and will be less open to having a discussion about it and more likely to reject you due to lack of information and fear. Unintentionally framing the conversation as something negative or shameful will set the tone that herpes is something to be feared and concerned about rather than a simple virus that a majority of the population has.

Avoid:

- **Apologize for having herpes:** Herpes is not something to apologize for it is not a personal shortcoming it is simply a piece of health information so that your partner can make an informed choice. You have not done anything wrong or put them at any risk.
- **Phrases like “this is probably going to ruin everything” :** by putting that out in the universe you are planting the seed of negativity and doubt. They are not making their own decision; they are being led to a rejection. It can also come off as Validation-seeking behavior. Where you are looking for someone to make you feel better about this situation which can make the other person feel pressured to respond a certain way, like they cannot comfortably say no because they feel bad for you.
- **Self-rejecting (I wouldn’t accept me so I understand if you don’t want to proceed”):** especially in fast paced hook up culture where everyone has dozens of potential matches on an app, self rejection language makes it very easy for that person to just move on and without asking any questions or having a conversation. You are essentially giving them permission to reject you before they have even had a chance to think about the information for themselves.

It is also important to remember that **a rejection is not a failure of the disclosure**. People decline hookups for all kinds of reasons, lack of chemistry, timing, comfort levels, personal risk tolerance, difference in kinks or simply because they changed their mind. Talk to your friends about their experiences dating or hooking up. You will learn that many of them, especially on

dating apps, get rejected or ghosted for so many things that have nothing to do with herpes. Rejection / ghosting is simply part of modern dating culture, not just herpes culture. Herpes may be the reason sometimes, but it is far from the only one.

You are not the only person bringing risk into a sexual encounter. Many people in hookup culture have never been tested for HSV, some carry it without knowing, and others may have different STIs entirely. Having herpes does not make you the “unsafe” partner in the situation, it just means you happen to know your status.

In many ways, **being someone who knows their status, discloses, and takes precautions actually makes you one of the more responsible partners someone could have.**

Oral Herpes Disclosure:

Oral herpes tends to be less stigmatized and is the most common form of herpes that most of the general population has. Oral herpes is commonly referred to as cold sores or fever blisters and are usually HSV-1 and rarely HSV-2.

There is a lot of discussion around oral herpes and disclosure being **MOST** people with cold sores do not disclose their herpes status and many are even unaware that cold sores/fever blisters are even a form of herpes. This leads to debates on whether you even have to disclose your oral herpes status and then that leads to further debates of the necessity of disclosing at all, especially for people with genital HSV-1.

Though it is highly recommended to disclose any type of herpes that you have prior to any activity that could potentially spread HSV it would be irresponsible to not mention societal norms and even in some cases doctor recommendation.

Oral HSV-1:

Oral HSV-1 is the most common strain location combination. 50-80% of the population has this exact configuration of herpes. This means that most people that you meet not only may have it but they most likely will be exposed to it in their lifetime. This is why many doctors will tell you that you do not have to disclose oral HSV-1 as there is a high chance that your partner already has it. (Once someone has a particular strain of herpes it is unlikely for them to get it again in a different location.)

Oral HSV-2

This is the rarest strain location combination due to the fact that HSV-2 prefers to live in the nerve cells located at the base of the spine. This means that it is less likely for a partner to contract it orally through kissing than if you were to partake in oral sex. Oral HSV-2 also tends to have less outbreaks / viral shedding than genital HSV-2 or oral HSV-1. It is also less likely to recur after the initial outbreak. Due to this the risk of transmission is also low. This is also why doctors may tell you that you do not have to disclose.

Societal Standards Vs Morality

Though it is still a form of herpes that can be transmitted to a partner through skin to skin activities such as kissing or oral sex it is less likely due to the facts above. If you were to watch people at bars and clubs you will see many people kissing strangers that they just met at a bar, not once does anyone discuss their cold sore status prior.

As much as the weight of disclosure and bringing up safe sex conversation tends to fall on the person with herpes there is still some responsibility on the other person if they care about their own health and herpes status. With no outbreak present and understanding your triggers, viral shedding symptoms or if you take antivirals you are a much safer random make-out partner than most people at the bar who have either never been tested, or those who are uneducated about what a cold sore/ fever blister even is.

Always remember that disclosing after a risky encounter is much harder to do than before. So that random person you hook-up with at the bar may want your number or to move things further and then you may have to disclose anyway. When you are dating someone it will be very hard for you to keep it a secret and your partner may feel betrayed, lied to, coerced and/or angry that you didn't tell them earlier. See **Disclosing Your Status After Risky Behavior** below.

At the end of the day disclosing your oral herpes status is your choice and is a decision that you have to live with. Some people feel that disclosure is important no matter what, others only disclose prior to partaking in oral sex (as genital herpes is more stigmatized some individuals feel that disclosure prior to this activity is more important than just kissing) and some only disclose to longer term partners and not a person they are kissing at a bar.

How To Disclose Oral Herpes

Due to the less stigmatized nature of oral herpes and the fact that most individuals will have some experience with it. Either through a friend or family member having it or themselves having it, disclosing your oral HSV status tends to be easier and more casual than disclosing genital herpes.

- **Dropping it casually in conversation:** one of the best ways to disclose without bringing the entire conversation to a halt is to casually drop it while you are talking to a person. Saying something along the lines of: **"Yeah I am so happy I can eat chips again! Last week I had a cold sore and it was annoying to eat anything this salty"** This is a fun casual way to say you have cold sores without making it a huge deal.
- **Casually Flashing Abreva or Lysine Chapstick:** Rummage through a purse or pocket and have it fall out or become visible and say something like **"Oh shit can't lose this it's expensive!"** and when the person asks what it is then say: **"Oh it's Abreva in case I get a cold sore, I like to have it on hand cause the sooner you use it the quicker it goes away"**.

- **Just Ask:** Be upfront and put the ball in their court. Ask them: **“Have you ever gotten a cold sore?”** and see how they respond. Anyone not narrow minded will either say **“yes”** or **“no but I know a person who gets them”**. This would be a perfect time to swoop in and say **“well now you know 2 people who get them”**. Anyone who acts hostile toward that question with either an “eww” or “hell no I’m clean” is not someone who is informed, empathetic, or ready to have adult conversations about sexual health. Just shrug and say “oh ok” and excuse yourself as soon as you can and move on to the next hottie at the bar.
- **Don’t Lie or Hide It:** one of my easiest disclosures was when I went on a date with someone and I actively had a cold sore. I had two options: postpone the date or just be upfront. Prior to the date I messaged them **“hey don’t know if you want to postpone but I just got a cold sore so no kissing on this date”** and then let them decide. If I was to lie about why I needed to postpone then I would still be left with having to disclose. Instead I was upfront and not only disclosed but got to see how they reacted to me having an outbreak. (yes we went on the date and continued to date for a couple of months).
- **Use Misinformation To Your Advantage:** sometimes especially in casual situations people make well intentioned jokes that they do not realize can be potentially hurtful or just spreading misinformation. At a bar you may hear your potential partner say something like **“do you want a sip of my drink? You can use my straw, it’s not like I have herpes or anything.”** (this is an actual thing that has happened to me) I responded with **“why is that a deal breaker for you?”** or **“how do you know I don’t have it?”** Watching them trip over themselves is a bit funny and it’s a good way to gauge their reaction. If they start reacting badly say **“chill dude I was just messing with you”** and then at your earliest convenience excuse yourself and move on to someone else. (In my experience the few people I have done this with ended up being fine with my status)

Disclosures do not have to be this big thing that derails a conversation especially in casual situations like a bar or a club. Most people in bars that I have mentioned that I get cold sores say **“yeah I get those too”** or **“yeah I know those are annoying my mom gets them”**.

Disclosing You Are Having An Outbreak While In A Sexual Relationship:

For some people disclosing that they are having an outbreak when in a relationship can be just as nerve wracking as initially disclosing to a new partner. These notifications to your partner do not have to be super serious or something out of an informational pamphlet but can be personal to your relationship, funny or even silly. Just because herpes may seem scary or intimidating to talk about doesn’t mean that you can’t handle it with dry humor or personality. I throw a herpes plush toy at my partner to alert him of an outbreak. There are always ways to make this conversation easier and more approachable:

1. Come up with a cute code word to make it more comfortable sayings like “Aunt Flo is visiting” or “it’s that time of the month” is used for a person’s menstrual cycle come up with something similar for your herpes “Hector is on the loose this week” or “My skin’s throwing a little tantrum.”, “My ____ is on museum rules this week you can look but cannot touch” or

"It's a red alert kind of week." so your partner is aware of what is going on while not using awkward terminology or making you feel bad about it. Some couples even use memes, emojis or gifs to make their partner aware. A giant red circle emoji means I am having an outbreak or a gif of Gandalf saying "YOU SHALL NOT PASS".

2. Tell your partner about your outbreak routine:

- Are you depressed or moody if you're having an outbreak? Do you need time alone or to be pampered with your favorite snack or movie?
- Do you have painful or irritating outbreaks or are they more mild? Do you need medication and soothing baths or do you just ride it out?
- Do you feel more comfortable talking about it or would you rather have some privacy and for your partner to treat it as if nothing is going on besides a break from sex?

For each person the answers vary and they can change over time, it is important to discuss these together so that your partner can be there for you in the ways that benefit both of you as a couple. Some partners will ignore the outbreak entirely, feeling like that is how they would want to be treated in that situation when all you want is to be doted on and to feel extra love and support. Others may dote on you and make it a big deal so that they can show how supportive they are and that may trigger you into feeling bad about it or that your partner is freaked out or secretly annoyed at you for having an outbreak, being that is all they are talking about or focused on. Communication is key in any relationship and this is no different.

****DO NOT MAKE THIS A NERVOUS CONFESSION OR APPROACH IT LIKE YOU ARE GUILTY OF SOMETHING. ****

You already did the hard part you initially disclosed, your partner is aware of your status, they knew what they were signing on for. There is no reason to feel guilty or less than because the thing you told them about is actually occurring. You are worth more than your body and what sexual favors you provide for someone regardless of your relationship status. Even with a hook up buddy they shouldn't get angry or upset with you if you aren't able to "perform for them for one week". You are a human not a sex object and if a partner makes you feel badly for not being able to have sex for a short period of time especially due to a virus that you previously warned them was something that occasionally could happen **GET OUT OF THERE**. That person does not respect you as a human being and is only considering what you can physically provide for them.

****DO NOT FEEL THAT YOU OWE THEM OR HAVE TO PERFORM OTHER ACTS FOR THEM TO "MAKE UP FOR BEING OUT OF COMMISSION"*****

Just because you cannot do certain things depending on where your outbreaks occur with your partner does not mean that you have to do others to make up for you not being fully available. For example if you have genital herpes do not feel that you have to perform oral sex to make your partner happy to make up for not having sex. Do not feel that you have to be overly nice or do crazy romantic stunts to make yourself worth love during your outbreak. Take care of yourself

and any good partner should want to take care of you not guilt you into “being available to them”.

Disclosing Your Status After Risky Behavior:

What To Do Next:

So you engaged in some sort of activity that could have potentially exposed or transmitted herpes to a partner and you didn't disclose. Or you were under the assumption that you didn't have to disclose because either a doctor told you that you didn't have to or this was a hookup that you thought was a one time thing and you are now looking to explore relationship territory and you want to be honest.

First off I hope this is a first time offense for this and that going forward you disclose prior to participating in any skin to skin contact that puts a partner at risk. You also need to understand that this is a much harder disclosure to do being the person will also feel lied to or betrayed. To them it could feel like that by not telling them about your herpes status prior to the activity that you were manipulating them into sleeping with you or that you don't care about their health, only your ability to get laid. This is far from true in most cases and for most people it is the fear of rejection or just the anxiety around disclosing that prevented them from being upfront about their status but you have to understand from their perspective it doesn't look that way.

The Important Thing Is Your Tone:

- Be apologetic but not a victim. Admit that not telling them for whatever reason you didn't was wrong without adding things like but “it is so hard for me” or “I know I am a horrible person for not telling you” when you are apologizing for something making the other person comfort you for the thing you chose to do wrong sets a bad tone and isn't a true apology.
- Don't say that you accidentally didn't disclose or that you just forgot because that will come off as a cop out and will make the other person not believe anything else you say because how can someone “forget that they have herpes” .
- Do not put blame on the other person for not asking. Yes they should be asking but at the end of the day it's the person who knows their status's job to tell their partner in order for informed consent to be achieved.
- Try not to blame things like “I didn't want to kill the mood” or “I just liked you so much I didn't want to stop” this implies that sleeping with them was more important to you than their sexual health and that you would have rather lied / omitted the truth rather than be honest and give them a choice about their own sexual health. This does not set a good tone for an actual relationship or that you can be trusted.
- Do not say things like “It's not a big deal” or make them feel invalid for having feelings to finding out that they potentially caught an incurable STI because you chose to not tell them.

To them it may be a big deal and you didn't give them a choice or any information about it for them to consider before putting them at risk. They have a right to feel scared, confused, angry, betrayed or upset.

How To Approach It:

I would talk to your partner in the way that you typically communicate with them (ex: texting, calling, FaceTime, in person etc. and say that you need to talk to them about something important when they have time. Not bad, just something that needs them to not be distracted by work, school etc. You do not want to send a message like this while they are busy with something else or with people that can weigh-in in real time with opinions.

"I want to be honest with you about something, even though I know I should've brought it up sooner. I have HSV, and I realize now that not telling you before we [hooked up / were intimate / etc.] was the wrong decision. I've been feeling a lot of guilt, and it's been weighing on me because I never want to build any kind of relationship, romantic, sexual or otherwise, on dishonesty or hiding something important. I understand if you're upset or need time to process this. I just couldn't go forward without being honest."

Using HSV instead of herpes even in this case has less of a stigma attached to it and may soften the blow rather than immediately jumping to using the word herpes)

End with:

"Going forward I want to be nothing but transparent and honest with you and would love to talk about this more and answer all the questions you have. (I am sure you have many). I will do my best to answer all of them to the best of my ability."

Do not end with phrases like "I will understand if you never want to speak to me again", "I know I am the worst type of person" or "I wouldn't want to be with me either". These self deprecating phrases like that make herpes seem more like something to be ashamed of when that is not the shame here. The apology is not for having herpes, it's for withholding information. By ending with an invitation to ask questions that makes this an open conversation giving them room to respond and have feelings about this.

- If it was a one night stand or a hookup that you will never see again and you are feeling remorseful you could wait 6-14 weeks after your interaction and use an anonymous platform such as: <https://tellyourpartner.org> to message them to get tested. This way you clear your conscience without adding drama where there may not need to be. If they have had symptoms they would have most likely reached out to you by this point to confront you. If they hooked up with you without asking your status and also did not develop symptoms and you tell them to get tested there is a chance that they have never been tested for herpes before you and may have also have it without knowing and by you being honest and them

testing positive all the blame will be on you regardless on if you gave it to them or not. This is not how you should be approaching hook ups and it is important to note that disclosing prior is the right way to engage in any adult activities but blowing up your life is not a deserving punishment for a lapse in judgement. Of course if they approach you with symptoms refer to the above message and try to answer any questions that they may have and be comforting and apologetic.

- If your doctor told you that you didn't have to disclose but after that didn't sit right with you. You could use the message above and add something along the lines of ***"my doctor told me when I was diagnosed that because it is so common that I didn't have to tell anyone but after we did _____ I felt so bad about not telling you that I feel like I have to be honest now"***

Unacceptable Partners Responses:

Making a mistake doesn't mean you deserve to be treated poorly or subjected to verbal abuse. It's okay for someone to feel upset or need time to process, but that doesn't give them the right to be cruel or aggressive toward you. You're human, and you're allowed to make mistakes, especially when you're learning and growing from them. If you've apologized and took precautions to reduce the risk of transmission, you've acted more responsibly than many who are unaware of their status. Yes, disclosing after the fact isn't ideal, but it doesn't make you a bad person, and it absolutely doesn't justify being berated or dehumanized.

There are responses you don't have to accept. If someone becomes cruel, shaming, or verbally abusive, it's okay to set a boundary. You can say something like:

"There's nothing more I can say beyond that I'm truly sorry. I'm open to answering any genuine questions you have, but I won't engage with insults, name-calling, or anything meant to shame or degrade me. I understand that you're angry, and you have every right to feel that way. This conversation should've happened differently, and I take full responsibility for that. But I won't respond to hurtful messages. I'll give you space to cool down, and if you want to talk more about this when you're ready, I'll be here."

Some examples of messages that are not acceptable are:

- **Blatant name calling** or anything that degrades or shames you like saying you are a slut or deserved herpes or deserve to go to prison or die.
- **Threats to your safety, your properties safety or the safety of others.** Any form of threatening to publicly tell your herpes status (this is defamation of character and a breach of privacy which you could legally fight) or keying your car or threats of physical violence

- **Circular conversations**, basically rehashing the same things over and over again without making any progress or change. This is not a healthy conversation to be in and feel free to say something like ***“I feel that at this time we are having the same conversation over and over again and not getting anywhere, it seems that we cannot get on the same page so I feel that it is best if we go our separate ways or come back to this when we have both had time to gather our thoughts and feelings”***
- **The Guilt-Tripper:** Someone who has the need for you to continuously grovel and be apologetic. Yes you were wrong and yes you should be apologetic but someone who continuously makes you feel like the worst person in the world after you genuinely apologize is not a healthy response. There is no turning back time to undo it, you can only move forward and fix it by being open and honest in the future.

Responses To Expect:

You will most likely be met initially with fear, tears or anger

Fear:

The person will most likely be concerned with their own health risks. Did I catch it? How would I know? What are the chances? The best way to combat this is with facts and science.

- Ease their mind with what precautions you took that made it safe for them. Did you use condoms? Do you take antivirals? When was your last outbreak? Do you know your transmission risk?
 - **Transmission Information:** This link is transmission statistics look here to see what was the risk for the specific activity you and that partner did.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xRL3jM3qLB5nh-b2B7tXOU2wrRoPgXclFBu7ICGpkbl/edit?usp=sharing>
- **Educate Them:** The fear is coming from the uncertainty of what herpes even is and how it is spread. Come at them with facts backed by science so they can begin to trust you. They may question every fact you tell them being you essentially lied to them by omitting that you had it in the first place so having these answers backed by more than just “taking your word for it” may help ease their mind. **Myths About Herpes:** This is a list of common myths about herpes and why they are wrong with cited sources.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-6oZmnfywTFNYSckYCY7Mh7MXZKrA0GUcztS8Bz5bW0k/edit>
- **Give them testing information:** This is all information on herpes testing. How to read the test, where to get the tests done, the limitations of the testing and which test may be right for you.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/12WNlb6LT4uzTTlqp07vtfWjm5oclHav3ZyED_U0ml8o/edit?usp=sharing

- **Show Them Success Stories:** they still may be wary so a less intense way is to let them do some guided research on their own and give them some space to process
 - **List Of Social Medias:** This is a list of social Medias about herpes. Sometimes it does people good to see people being public about it and the amount of success people with herpes have living very normal lives. The accounts are funny and informative and all herpes positive. There is everything on there from podcasts, YouTube, TikToks, blogs, Facebook support groups, Instagram pages, dating pages, subreddits, and websites
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E6uCpRELklDFFqtTcYLkdC-3Zo50O4EEqaXJ-5j2cC8/edit?usp=sharing>
 - **Positive Herpes Stories:** These are a bunch of positive stories about herpes that were found on Reddit. These are a bunch of positive posts that I could find about living, dating and thriving with herpes.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11sLzFHVpTWhNCzRSPgqp9pwPqzFrPiwHWJRO83j980M/edit?usp=sharing>

Tears:

Some people when confronted with hard to process information will cry or become upset. This is a normal response especially when they feel that they were betrayed by someone they trusted. Give the person space to feel their feelings and do not aggressively try to overcompensate to fix it.

While someone is crying they are not thinking clearly and will have trouble processing heavy information like facts and statistics. So hold off on the information dumping so as to not overload them. If you are in person you can offer comfort like a hug or rub their shoulder (but do not be surprised or offended if they do not want you to touch them in that moment it has nothing to do with you being “gross for having herpes” and everything to do with the fact they are mad at you for not telling them.) Give them space to have their big feelings and when they calm down then be there with support and answers.

You can say something along the lines of:

“I understand that this is a lot to take in right now and I will give you space and time to process but I want you to know this isn’t me ghosting you or bailing. I am here whenever you are ready to talk about this more or ask me any questions. You have every right to be upset at me I just hope we can get to a place where you feel comfortable to talk to me further about this so I can prove to you that I will be open, honest and never lie about it again”

Anger:

This is most likely the most common response to a late disclosure. The person will feel betrayed, confused and want to take that out on the person who is the cause. Which in this case is you. It is important to remain apologetic while also staying safe and protecting your own mental health. Just because they have a right to be angry does not give them the right to threaten, insult or be cruel.

Certain responses are acceptable angry responses; they express emotion without attacking you directly or going for cheap shots. These can look like:

“How could you have done this to me?”:

Any question along this line is coming from a place of fear of the unknown. Apologize and explain to them the precautions you took and the transmission risk. There is a high chance that the only thing you “did to them” was withhold information and not give them herpes like they fear you did. Most people think that if you slept with someone with herpes they automatically have it too.

"I'm pissed. You took away my choice, and that's not fair.":

This is one of the harder statements to respond to. You did take away their choice and made a decision about their health for them. The only way to really get past that is to reiterate your apology

“I know it really isn’t okay that I didn’t give you all the information upfront and you have every right to be pissed. This is why I’m coming to you now to make this right and answer all your questions.”

"Do you realize how serious this is? You should have been upfront. I deserve that much.":

This also comes more from a place of fear more than anything. People really feel that herpes is a major health risk. It is important here to give facts without negating their feelings.

“You’re right, you absolutely deserved to know beforehand, and I’m really sorry I didn’t tell you. I understand how serious this feels, and I know that herpes can bring up a lot of fear. That fear is valid. I want to be honest with you now and give you all the information I can, not to downplay anything, but to help you feel informed. I also want to share the precautions I took to reduce the risk, not as an excuse, but as part of being transparent. You deserve that.”

"I need time. I'm angry and confused and honestly don't even know what to say to you right now.":

This is good, it is better to approach this convo with a level head and not in a fit of rage. I would say

"I understand that this is a lot to take in right now and I will give you space and time to process but I want you to know this isn't me ghosting you or bailing. I am here whenever you are ready to talk about this more or ask me any questions. You have every right to be angry at me I just hope we can get to a place where you feel comfortable to talk to me further about this so I can prove to you that I will be open, honest and never lie about it again"

Do not pressure them to respond to you right away but maybe check-in in a couple of days if this is someone that you want to pursue

"Hey just wanted to check in and see how you were feeling and to remind you that I'm here if you have any questions"

If they do not respond or say something similar again, drop it. You deserve a partner that is willing to communicate with you. Even though you did something wrong this is an important conversation to have and if they are unresponsive, unwilling to talk or ask questions or dismissive this is not something you should pursue.

"I wouldn't have made the same decision if I had all the information.":

This one may sting to hear because that is every person with herpes fear that someone who would be willing to be with them would reject them for herpes alone. But the truth of the matter is there is no way of knowing what actually would have happened if you approached the disclosure differently. If you came to them with all the information and were upfront and honest people are much more willing to calmly discuss options, facts and precautions and are more open minded. This statement being made at this point in time is coming from a place of anger and betrayal not of sound mind.

"I am sorry you feel this way and I understand your decision if you have any questions I will be here to answer them"

"I feel violated. I know that sounds dramatic, but that's how it feels to me.":

Violated does seem like a strong word but that is a valid feeling to have. They trusted you to tell them the truth about your sexual health and you lied by omission. It feels like a manipulation tool to just get them into bed.

"I completely understand why you feel that way, and it doesn't sound dramatic at all. You trusted me to be honest, and I didn't handle that the way I should have. I'm genuinely sorry for making you feel violated or misled. That was never my intention, and I'm here now to be fully honest with you. If you have any questions or just need space, I respect that, I just want you to know I'm not hiding anything anymore."

If they were to say things along the lines of the things below are unacceptable. They are insulting, name calling and aggressive.

- **"You're disgusting.":** This is an attack on you for something that was out of your control. Herpes is not disgusting, it is a virus. This person is not open to communicating further about this situation and even if they do it will be hard to form a solid relationship if this is their initial response to herpes.
 - **"You ruined my life.":** This is jumping to conclusions, there is no way they even know if you passed it to them yet how did you "ruin their life" by simply being honest and apologizing?
 - **"No one will ever want you.":** this is also not a true statement and is just being said to hurt you. Most people in the dating pool have herpes but this statement is a full stop with going further with this person. Clearly they are uninterested in learning about it and feel that all people with herpes are undatable. Apologize for not telling them upfront and move on.
 - **"You're a liar and a manipulator.":** This is a **YELLOW** flag. Proceed with caution. While they have a right to feel this way being essentially you did lie and in some ways depending on how you look at it manipulated the situation so that you get laid by not telling them you are telling them now. Mention that yes while it may seem that you were lying to get into their pants that is not true and that if you were really a liar and manipulator you wouldn't be telling them now. That you really do not want to be perceived that way at all which is why you are trying to fix what was already done.
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Conclusion:

It is important to note that you are dealing with humans who all have their own personal baggage, feelings and knee-jerk reactions. At any time a positive response can turn into a negative one or vice versus. Some people get angry or upset right away while others take time to process the information and then become angry or upset. Be patient and see how the conversation goes. Someone who is initially angry may just need a moment to process and they may be open to having a further conversation with you after some time to think and do some research and self reflection. The only thing you can do is apologize (not excessively just

genuinely) and give the facts and let them sort out their feelings with you to guide them the best you can.

The most important thing to remember is to **RESPECT YOURSELF & YOUR BOUNDARIES** just because you did something wrong does not make you a bad person and does not mean that you deserve disrespect or to compromise your boundaries to make them feel better. Do not let anyone call you names, or shame you, do not grovel or beg for acceptance or forgiveness.

Disclosing When You Didn't Know Your Status Prior:

If you didn't know your status prior to the encounter and either found out after the fact or are suddenly having symptoms this is another type of disclosure that may occur.

Finding Out You Have Had Herpes Before Your New Partner:

If you tested positive on a IgG blood test this means that you have had herpes for a minimum of 6 weeks (IgG blood tests takes 6-14 weeks before they will come back positive for herpes) so if you have a new partner and get a herpes IgG test and find out that you had it and didn't know and already slept with that new partner telling them may be confusing:

- You can start off this conversation by saying that you had a doctor's appointment ___ days ago and they ran a STD panel just to be safe as part of a check up and that you're waiting for the results before sleeping with them again just because that seems like the responsible thing to do. (Even if you already have the results fudging the timeline so it is less of a bomb can help with the disclosure) You can even bring up that they should also get one so going forward we both have all the information needed to stay safe.
- Then wait a day or two and say *"Hey remember that test I told you about well everything came back negative except I tested positive for HSV- 1 / 2. My doctor told me that since the test came back positive already that I most likely got it from a previous partner who either lied to me about their status or didn't even know they had it. I'm sorry I am telling you after the fact but I literally just found out myself."*
 - If you tested positive for HSV-1 with no symptoms it is most likely that you got this in childhood orally through kissing a family member
 - If you tested positive for HSV-2 with no symptoms it is most likely from a sexual partner genitally.
- You can also add that *"Since I am asymptomatic (haven't had an outbreak) it is very unlikely that I transmitted it to you being asymptomatic carriers virally shed less than symptomatic ones and I am discussing all the ways to make sure that I keep my partners safe in the future."*
- Also make sure that they get tested as well to see if they also unknowingly have it. Which is why it is good to mention testing when you first bring up the conversation.

Getting Symptoms After Sleeping With Someone New:

This can happen for 2 different reasons.

The person you slept with had herpes and gave it to you:

Whether knowingly or unknowingly your partner could have had herpes and gave it to you. Usually if this is the case you will have a major first outbreak and have flu like symptoms prior to the outbreak. Usually a first outbreak will appear 3 - 5 days after exposure. (This can vary from person to person but this is the standard timeline.)

Tell your partner that something is going on with you healthwise and that you are going to a doctor to get looked at. This is a good way to gauge if the person knows anything. If they start acting funny or even confess that they have herpes and didn't tell you. When the test results come back you can say something like *"Remember when I went to the doctor well the tests came back and it says that I have HSV - 1/ 2 and due to my reaction to it they think this is a recent exposure. Do you have herpes or have you ever been tested?"*

Be prepared for them to get defensive at this question, if they have never had symptoms and went for an STI panel they may think that you are gaslighting them into thinking they have it. If they say something like *"No I've never had symptoms"* or *"I was just tested recently and I am clean"*. You can respond with:

"I am not blaming you for anything, I am just trying to figure out where this came from. My doctor told me that most people who have herpes never show any signs or symptoms and it can transmit without symptoms present. I also thought that I was tested recently and it turns out most STI panels do not include a test for herpes."

See how they respond; they may double down and insist they don't have it. If they are telling you the truth they should have no issues sending you a copy of their results or getting tested again with you. They would also most likely be concerned for their own health and not get super aggressive or defensive. Trust your gut feelings.

The new partner triggered an existing herpes virus

Herpes is a virus that can lay dormant for your entire life meaning that you are asymptomatic and never have signs or symptoms. However it can become active if there is a change in things like stress, diet, or partner. A new partner can trigger your first outbreak to appear which in many cases is when a person can realize they have herpes.

The only way to really know if you had it prior to the most recent partner is to get an IgG blood test along with the swab test. The swab test will tell you if the outbreak sores you are experiencing are herpes and the IgG blood test will test for long term antibodies in your system that take 6-14 weeks for your body to produce. Though this isn't a 100% surefire way to know if you had it prior to the new partner it does paint a clearer picture. If you got herpes from someone you slept with 7 days ago it in most cases should not trigger a positive IgG blood test.

If this occurs follow the disclosure section above: **Finding Out You Have Had Herpes Before Your New Partner.**

Disclosing to Friends, Family & Other Non-Sexual Relationships:

There is always discussion around disclosing to family members, friendships, roommates and even co-workers and while having a support system is very important for your mental health, disclosing to people that you are not sexually active with is not mandatory unless you are engaging in any behavior that may expose them to your herpes.

Family:

Disclosing to your family members is only important if you have oral herpes and are a family that kisses each other on the face or mouth. Even then a full disclosure is not necessary if you feel that your family would be judgmental or uneducated around herpes. You can opt for a more vague approach by saying that you are feeling under the weather or that you no longer want to greet with kisses and that you are no longer comfortable with that type of contact.

In other words the only time you should tell a family member your STI status is if you feel that they will be supportive, helpful or understanding. Most people when they are newly diagnosed are already beating themselves up and feel very upset, depressed or “unclean” if you tell a judgmental family member it can make you feel worse and would be unproductive. People have reported family members who are uneducated forcing the person with herpes to use separate restrooms, dishes etc out of fear of transmission or have said things like “this is what happens when you sleep around” or some other form of slut shaming which is not productive and unhelpful. Only you know the relationship that you have with your family members and only you can decide if it is worth it to confide in them. Having a support system is extremely helpful when first getting diagnosed so if you have a supportive family member that either is understanding, or may have gone through something similar it could be an amazing bonding experience and tool for you to use as you cope and heal.

Types of Parents / Guardians That You Can Tell:

1. **Adults who openly talk about sex in a healthy, non-judgmental way:** These are people who have made it clear that sex is not a taboo topic.
2. **Adults who had the “birds & bees” talk with you openly.**
3. **Adults who have said things like: “I am always here for you” or “you can always come to me” or “I’d rather know than be kept in the dark.”**
4. **Adults in the medical field:** They tend to view herpes and other sexual health issues through a factual lens, not a shame-based one.
5. **Adults that have offered you birth control, condoms or safe sex advice:** in order to keep you safe, these are adults that are already aware that you may be sexually active so they will not be as shocked by the herpes conversation.

6. **Adults in the LGBTQIA+:** people in these communities tend to be more open minded and have experience with reducing stigma, and discussing sexual health and topics more openly.
7. **Adults in the psychology, social work and therapy fields:** they have to deal with things of this nature often and can be more receptive rather than judgemental. They are also trained to deal with topics like this and can potentially be more calm, compassionate and supportive.
8. **Adults who have helped you navigate a tough situation before:** adults who reacted reasonably when you admitted other sensitive things (e.g., failing a class, drinking, dating, coming out etc.).
9. **Adults who have shared their own medical experiences openly:** showing that health issues are normal and nothing to be ashamed of.
10. **Adults who are open about therapy, counseling, or emotional support:** they tend to see seeking help as mature, not weak. These are individuals who understand the importance of mental health and will also tend to be more open to you and your mental health.

Types of Parents/ Guardians To Test The Waters:

1. **Adults who are squeamish when talking about sex:** these adults may have avoided the “birds & bees talk” with you all together as the thought of you taking part in adult activities makes them extremely uncomfortable. Though this may make the conversation in the beginning more difficult it doesn’t mean that they will be angry or judgemental, just a little uncomfortable. You can even use your lack of education as a reason for the herpes by saying “**no one taught me so I didn’t know how to have sex safely**”
2. **Adults who have preached abstinence (no sex):** these adults may be a bit more judgemental and say things like “**I warned you something like this may have happened**” but it doesn’t mean that they will stay angry.
3. **Adults who have spoken judgementally about other people's sex lives or choices:** think of adults who slut shame or talk down on people who have different sexual preferences, sometimes they are judgemental of others but if it was happening to someone close to them they have a different mindset.
4. **Mildly religious adults:** not super religious but mildly they may be a bit more upset as most religions frown on sex before marriage but they are more open than firmly religious adults.
5. **Uneducated Adults:** these are people who perpetuate stigma and not facts. They may refer to people with STIs as “**dirty**” ; this is a lack of education. In many cases their opinions soften when it is someone they care about but it will be an uphill battle to educate them.
6. **Adults who treat you like a small child:** with strict rules, and no respect for your individuality or your independence. They will be inclined to help you but the conversation may be hard to have as they still see you as a child.

7. **Adults that have belittled problems in the past:** these adults may have said things like *"honey in 3 years this wont even be a problem"* or *"isn't this so cute, you think you're in love"* in reference to your love life. You might feel nervous opening up, but they may still be open to helping once they realize the seriousness of the situation.
8. **Adults that have repeatedly warned you about the dangers of "unsafe" sex.** The good news they are open to having a sex convo the bad news they gave you information that they may use as a **"I told you so"**
9. **Extremely Conservative Adults:** not all republicans/conservatives are closed minded around sexual topics but a lot of them are. Only you know the adults in your life to make that judgement call but in general when it comes to sex far right conservatives tend to be more closed off.

Types of Parents/Guardians You May Want To Refrain:

1. **Firmly religious adults:** especially in religions where purity, abstinence, or virginity are heavily enforced. These adults are very closed off to sexual health conversations and may in some cases even tell a religious leader.
2. **Authoritative adults:** that have extremely strict rules and punishments. They may react with anger rather than support.
3. **Adults with no respect for privacy:** especially adults who have been known to tell others your business even when asked not to. This can be to friends, family, or even them cracking inappropriate jokes at your expense.
4. **Adults who use extreme punishments** for other wrong doings such as physical discipline, threats, or withholding necessities. Your emotional and physical safety should always come first.
5. **Adults that have kicked you out in the past:** if an adult has locked you out of your house or told you not to come home for a different "wrongdoing" you may want to think about it prior to putting yourself in that situation.

Ways To Start The Conversation:

1. **Be Honest About Symptoms:** if you are concerned that you have herpes and have not been officially diagnosed, start off by telling a trusted adult about your symptoms and that you want to go to a doctor. Starting off with telling them the truth will open the doorway for being open with them about your diagnosis if it happens.
2. **If You Got Diagnosed:** tell them that you got your results back and that it was positive for HSV, the virus that normally causes cold sores. See their reaction if they ask you how this happened you don't have to tell them all the details just be as open as you would like to be. Tell them that you are scared and that you need them and need help to get through this. Most parents want to be there for you and help you any way that they can.
3. **Make Sure It Is The Right Time & Place:** do not bring it up while they are in the middle of doing something or if they are distracted or previously angry about something else. Make sure that there are no time crunches or other distractions that may get in the way.

Tell them that you have something that you need to talk to them about something important and that you need their undivided attention.

4. **Try To Stick To Facts:** talking about anything to do with sex with a parent can be emotional and a little dramatic. Try steering the conversation to a more factual way instead of the who, where, how of it all will make it more manageable. Try to stick to what you need from them medically and emotionally. If they start pressing more into the how did you get it and from who etc. say something like ***“The important thing right now is that I have it, and I need help figuring out what to do next.”***
5. **Ask Your Doctor For Help:** the doctor may be able to help you with your disclosure as a doctors office is a safe public space with a medical professional guiding the conversation. They can help calm your parents/guardians while answering all questions that they may have. This can help smooth the situation over as all the attention will not be on you but on the doctor as well. This can give your parent/guardian the time they need to process the information rather than immediately turning it on you. This will also help your parents/guardians see the herpes diagnosis as a medical condition rather than a personal failing on your part.

Reactions:

At the end of the day these are your parents so they may be disappointed, judgemental, angry or upset. This does not mean they love you less or that your relationship will not recover. They are humans and in most cases they just need some time to adjust to the fact that you are no longer a little child and that you are partaking in adult activities such as sex. If they start making you feel worse or start to yell at you or lecture you try approaching it with a ***“I know I’ve made mistakes, and I’m already processing that. I need your help now to figure out what to do.”***. This should help them pause and come at the situation differently. You can also try to say ***“I understand you’re upset, but I came to you because I need support, and right now I’m already worried about this.”***

Roommates:

When getting diagnosed some people are afraid of transmission to the people they live with. As stated above: You are also not a walking contagious herpes sore and even if you do not feel comfortable disclosing your herpes to the people you live with that does put them at risk as long as you are not engaging in activity that exposes them to the area that gets herpes outbreaks. The exposure has to be skin-to-skin and herpes will not transmit through towels, silverware, toilets or anything like that. There is no risk with sharing a washing machine, showers, sheets or clothing as long as you are not rubbing an outbreak on the clothing and then immediately letting another person wear them (within seconds). You do not need a separate living area or set of dishes etc. you can live as normal and there is no risk of transmission unless there is skin-to-skin contact with the area that gets outbreaks and another person's skin (and even then the only real risk is if you come in contact with the others persons mucus membrane areas aka eyes, nose, mouth, genitals and/or anus).

Roommates especially in college or if you are not friends with them prior (like a craigslist roommate) are more likely to be judgmental or not a support system as you have no relationship outside of living together. It is unnecessary to disclose to someone when there is 0 risk of transmission. If you would like to disclose then that is fine but it is not something that you are required to do as a transmission prevention precaution or to alter any type of living arrangement. (People with herpes do not need to take any precautions with everyday living arrangements like separate bathrooms, dishes, towels etc. as herpes does not transmit through objects like that.)

Friends:

It is important to surround yourself with a great support system full of people that are there for you and lift you up when you are down. A true friend should not judge you and should want to be there for you in your time of need. A real friend is someone who will keep your secrets, educate themselves on a subject to help you out and will be there for you with an open mind. Going through a herpes diagnosis can feel isolating and depressing and telling a friend can be very helpful to vent and to practice your disclosures to. Obviously not every friend you have is at the same trust level so think about who is there for you and who will be mature about it.

Friends that are most likely safe to tell:

- Friends that share secrets with. Where both of you know everything about one another with no issues with finding out they told another friend without your knowledge and have come to you with their secrets as well.
- Friends that are open minded and seem open to learning new things, and are non-judgmental of others life-style choices or sexual experiences.
- Friends that are at the same sexual level as you. People that you swap sex stories or are sexually open are usually less judgmental about sex experiences than someone that is a bit more conservative when it comes to sex things.
- Friends that you have a long history with. These are the types of people that have seen you through many stages of your life and have proved to be there for you many times over. They also tend to have more loyalty to you than others in the friend group as they have known you for a while.
- Friends that have proven to be empathetic in other situations. These are people that will go out of their way to make sure everyone is included, they check in when they know you are going through a rough time and they talk about others in a positive way and are always making sure those around them are comfortable and supported.
- Friends that are open about themselves sexually, and in general. These people share stories that may not paint themselves in the best light but they are honest and open. They are open to criticism and are able to talk about tough topics freely and openly without worrying about being judged by others as they are comfortable in themselves. These people tend to not judge others either and are able to have hard conversations.

- Friends that are part of the LGBTQIA+ or polyamory community. These individuals tend to know more about sex, sexual health and are in general more open minded than members of the straight community. (Obviously this is a generalization and you have to decide if your friend fits this mold)

Friends to avoid telling:

- Anyone that is a known Gossip or that cannot keep a secret.
- Anyone that goes out of their way to make you feel bad or tries to one up you often.
- Anyone that you have heard make fun of others about sexual exploits (like omg did you hear ____ slept with ____)
- Anyone with an immature sense of humor that uses STIs as the butt of a joke.
- Anyone that is closed minded or overly judgmental of others outside (or inside) of your friend group.
- Brand new friends that you have no history with, you may want to wait a bit to gauge it more before telling them as you may not know them as well as you think.
- Anyone that acts jealous of you or puts you down in front of others in a “joking way” that isn’t really all that funny.
- Very religious, republican or conservative friends (yet again this is a blanket statement and not all members of this community will be judgmental or rude but many are so tread with caution). Religious and conservative people in general tend to feel a certain way around sex so they may be more judgmental than supportive.

Ways to gauge if a friend will be judgmental:

1. **Use the Gossip Method:** instead of coming out immediately saying that you have herpes, use an imaginary coworker or someone that the friend has never met and will never meet. Say something like “ I just found out that ____ got herpes from her boyfriend” and see how they react. See if they seem concerned, or judgy. Do they say something like “omg that is terrible I feel so bad what are they going to do?” or do they say something more like “ew that is so gross I would rather die”. If they say the second you can follow up with “it doesn’t seem all that bad actually they just have to take a pill once in a while” and see if the friend is open to being educated or if they shut down the convo with a “it’s still so gross like could you imagine”. This can give you a glimpse on how they may react if you told them your status.
2. **Use Social Media:** there are many social media herpes advocates all over the internet (Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, Facebook, Podcasts etc.) find an educational video and send it to your friend and make it seem like it popped up while you were doom scrolling. This is a good way to not only educate but see how they react. Do they make fun of the creator? Do they seem interested in learning more? Do they say something like “oh yeah I’ve

heard of that fact it's pretty crazy how common herpes is"? Do they deny the fact that you show them and say highly uninformed things? You can then talk about herpes or any STI more without it being about you and use that to segue into talking about you if you feel like the conversation is going well or change the subject if the conversation is going in a way that you do not like.

3. **Use misinformation to your advantage:** if you have a friend that makes inappropriate herpes jokes or STI jokes in general use that to your advantage to educate and to talk about it without it being about you specifically. For example: If a friend or someone around you says "You can try my drink it's not like I have herpes or anything" You can respond with "actually herpes isn't spread like that I would have to kiss you" or "are you sure? You know most people are asymptomatic" and see how they react. If they get weird about it they may be too immature to have a real conversation about STIs and may not be a good person to confide in..
4. **Use your symptoms:** tell your friend about some of your symptoms and WebMD together many herpes symptoms overlap with less stigmatized illnesses. Go through the list "prior" to your "doctor's appointment" and see how they react to it potentially being herpes. Are they supportive? If they aren't after your "doctors appointment" tell them that it was a false alarm and was just a UTI and that it will be all cleared up after some medication. If they are supportive of the potential of herpes then after the appointment tell them that you were diagnosed and go from there.
5. **Remember Cold Sores Are Herpes:** pay attention to your friends' mouths and see if any of them have cold sores. If they have cold sores they also have herpes and may be more accepting of you when you tell them. But also keep in mind that some people with cold sores are in denial of that fact and are overly judgmental of people with genital herpes as they have the "better form of herpes" (cold sores are not the better form of herpes in any way however some people like to think there is a hierarchy of herpes based on stigma which is not true and not backed by any type of science). Bring up that they have oral herpes and see how they react to you calling it that. If they freak out or seem highly uneducated with no interest in learning, drop the subject and move on without telling them about your status.

At the end of the day your herpes status does not affect your friendship at all. There is no risk of transmitting your genital herpes to a friend unless they are coming in contact with your genitals. Herpes does not transmit through objects, toilet seats, sheets or contact like hugging, swimming or shared spaces like beds. Oral herpes is only transmitted through kissing and if you are having a major active outbreak there is a small risk when sharing things like joints, vapes, straws, silverware without wiping it off or washing between you and your herpes negative friend. With no outbreak present herpes will not transmit through straws, vapes etc. there needs to be an outbreak present for there to even be a small chance of transmission through an object. A true friend will learn the facts, be non-judgmental and be there for you as a support system. They will not make you feel badly about it and will not tell others your personal medical information. Anyone who makes you feel "gross", "tainted" or "unclean" or any "friend" that continues to use

inappropriate herpes jokes around you, or “outs” you to other members of your group without your consent is not a real friend to you and is someone you should distance yourself from.

Coworkers, Employers or Human Resources:

There is no instance where you would need to tell anyone that you work with about your medical diagnosis unless it will impair your ability to work and even then not even your employer needs to know the specifics. If herpes is affecting your ability to work at your job your doctor can write you a note to excuse you from working for a time with no details as to why just that medically you are not cleared to work for a set amount of times. Having herpes will not interfere with most jobs that you will have, herpes is only transmitted through direct skin-to-skin contact with the area that gets outbreaks and another person especially with their mucus membrane sites (eye, nose, mouth, genitals or anus). Even jobs in the food service industry will not be affected by herpes

Whitlow (Hand Herpes):

Though there are some jobs that may involve the touching, or handling of mucus membrane sites such as eyes, nose, mouth, genitals or anus these jobs also usually require the use of gloves which eliminate the risk of transmission. If you have Whitlow and work any of the following jobs be sure to always wear medical grade gloves and be mindful of if a glove breaks or rips.

- 1. Dentist or dental hygienist:** even then usually there is no risk of transmission as this job requires you to wear gloves.
- 2. Day Care, Child Care:** or any job that requires diaper changes. These jobs often require the use of gloves during diaper changes so there should be no risk of transmission. If the place that you work at does not require gloves be sure to use them if you have herpetic whitlow to avoid any risk of transmission.
- 3. Doctors / Surgeons:** especially OBGYNs, eye doctors, or any job that requires you to touch a mucus membrane site (eyes, nose, mouth, genitals, or anus).
- 4. Food Service Industry:** if you are preparing or handling food directly (not the plates) wear gloves at all times and avoid touching or handling the silverware area that will come in contact with the mouth without wearing a glove. Chances of transmission through food / objects touching the food is extremely unlikely however having any open sore, cut or lesion, herpes or not, in contact with food is considered unsanitary and proper dressings should be used. Consult your restaurant's policy and follow the guidelines surrounding open cuts and sores to ensure you and your customers safety.

Oral Herpes:

There is no risk of transmission of oral herpes without skin-to-skin contact with the mouth area which very few jobs involve. Some jobs may include acting, modeling or jobs in the sex industry (porn, escorts, sex workers). Remember that 50-80% of the population has oral herpes in some form and many actors also have it so if that is the career path that you are on, check your

contracts and see if it disqualifies you from any specific roles. In most cases it will not and you will only run into an issue if you have an outbreak during filming or the day of a live performance.

The only concern with working and oral herpes is that the outbreak may be cosmetically unappealing (ugly to look at). After covid a good way to avoid people seeing the outbreak is to wear a medical mask. Just mention to an employer or anyone who asks, say that you are feeling under the weather and that you didn't want to get anyone else sick. Remember that herpes requires skin-to-skin contact to transmit so unless your job requires kissing there is no risk of transmission.

Genital Herpes:

The only jobs that will be affected by you having genital herpes are jobs in the sex working industry (porn, exotic dancing, escorts, or sex workers). These are the only jobs that could potentially transmit your herpes to another individual.

The only other way that genital herpes may affect you working is if you have outbreaks that are painful and make it hard to do the tasks required of you at work. If this happens go to your doctor and have them write you a note excusing you from work entirely or excusing you from the tasks that are causing you discomfort.

Doctor's Note

In instances where you need to be excused from work due to a herpes outbreak or anything herpes related you can obtain a note from your doctor to excuse you from certain tasks or from work entirely for a set period of time.

It is no one's business but you and your doctor as to why you are excused from work or doing certain tasks and the letter will be vague. No employer is allowed to ask you for specifics and if they do they are breaking the law. **Herpes is a private medical condition** protected under laws like the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** and **HIPAA** (in the U.S.). Doctors are not required (and shouldn't) disclose the specific condition, unless *you* give explicit permission. This protects your privacy under HIPAA (your medical information cannot be shared without your consent). If HR or your employer ever asks for more details, you can simply say: "It's a private medical matter; my doctor has provided the documentation required."

Doctors' notes typically just say something like:

"The patient was seen for a medical condition and requires [X days] off work."

Or

"The patient is under my care for a medical issue and may return to work on [date]."

Military Qualifications

If you live outside the United States you have to check with your recruitment offices as I can only really find information for the USA. But in general on a global scale herpes does **NOT** prevent you from joining any military branch, being drafted, or being deployed. If you have frequent/severe recurring outbreaks you may be required to obtain a medical waiver to ensure that your herpes will not interfere with your duty but this is rare and easily obtained by a doctor's note letting the recruitment office know that you are on daily antivirals. Herpes is also not tested for in military medical intake evaluations. The blood that they take is tested for HIV, syphilis, and hepatitis B and C, while urinalysis checks for drug use. If you look at the recruitment websites for branches like the army, navy, marines, airforce and national guard you will see under the disqualifications:

“Maintaining physical, mental, and emotional health helps you succeed in the Navy. These requirements are established to make sure you’re prepared to carry out your duties. Some medical conditions may disqualify you from serving in the Navy:

- *Contagious diseases that would endanger the health of other personnel*
- *Conditions or defects that require excessive time lost for necessary treatment or hospitalization*
- *Conditions demanding geographical area limitations*
- *Conditions aggravated by the performance of required duties and/or training*

You can still join with a medical disqualification as long as you get a medical waiver, which is issued on a case-by-case basis. If you have a specific medical condition and are not sure whether it disqualifies you, connect with a recruiter.”

This may seem like it is referring to something like herpes however it is referring to diseases that are transmitted through everyday activities not sex or kissing. In the military you are not supposed to "fraternize" with your coworkers so herpes doesn't fall into this category. (The example listed was pulled from the United States Navy official page but all other branches have something similar listed)

Sources:

- <https://legalclarity.org/does-the-military-routinely-test-for-herpes/>
- <https://www.navy.com/joining/requirements>
- <https://www.goarmy.com/how-to-join/requirements>
- <https://www.airforce.com/frequently-asked-questions/requirements-eligibility>
- https://www.marines.com/explore-the-corps/frequently-asked-questions.html?_gl=1*xk8gl0*_up*MQ.*_gs*MQ..&qclid=CjwKCAjwk7DFBhBAEiwAeYbJsWA6YO8YFTF-2sV4hEAqvaR4balWQMeSjm0kH33tlvfzHL1auOwGfhoCA3MQAvD_BwE
- <https://nationalguard.com/eligibility>

Doctors / Professionals That May Come In Skin-To-Skin Contact:

You may have a situation where you are getting a service done that requires a professional to come in contact with the area of your body that gets herpes outbreaks. People like dentists, tattoo artists, piercers, spa workers, aestheticians, waxers and medical providers are trained on how to keep not only their clients safe but also themselves. Most of these professions require

the use of medical grade gloves that will prevent any form of transmission. Also remember that a person has to come in direct skin-to-skin contact with the area that gets the outbreak in order for transmission to occur. This means if you have genital herpes and you're visiting the dentist, there is **zero** transmission risk. Likewise, if you have oral herpes and are getting Brazilian wax, there is **zero** risk. Also if you are getting services done outside the outbreak zone there is **zero** risk of transmission.

Even without the use of gloves there is a very low risk of transmission as Herpes is a very weak virus that only likes to live/transmit to mucus membrane sites (eyes, nose, mouth, genital, and anus) the skin that is located outside these areas tends to be too thick to catch herpes unless there is an open cut, lesion or sore already there. The skin on your hands is even thicker than the skin on your arm, cheek, neck etc. So the chances of transmission through a service that requires a professional to touch the area of your body that gets outbreaks is negligible.

If you are having an active outbreak you may want to reschedule your service or appointment to be extra cautious or to avoid discomfort. It's also worth remembering that **50–80% of the global population has some form of herpes**, and the vast majority still get facials, tattoos, piercings, waxes, and other services without issue.

Ways To Disclose If You Are Still Concerned:

1. **No Disclosure Needed:** if the place is handling a part of the body that you do not get outbreaks in (E.g. the dentist and you have genital herpes, or a Brazilian Wax and you have oral herpes, or are getting a tattoo in a place that does not get outbreaks) then disclosure is unnecessary as there is no chance of transmission.
2. **Require The Use of Gloves:** to avoid disclosing to a professional if the service does require the touching of the area that gets outbreaks and the professional is not using gloves it is within your right as a client to request the use of gloves. There are many reasons that the professional should be using gloves when touching the bare skin of a client and it is not unreasonable to request this.
3. **Intake Paperwork:** Many services include health questionnaires or checkboxes for past conditions, including herpes. Simply checking the box is usually enough. Professionals, especially in medical settings, are trained to be non-judgmental and typically will not bring it up unless it directly affects your care. In the U.S., HIPAA laws prevent them from discussing your medical information with anyone else. Other industries also have privacy policies to protect client information.
4. **Call Ahead:** if it is a place like a spa or tattoo parlor that you are unsure of the rules surrounding herpes you can always call ahead so as to avoid a face to face disclosure and remain anonymous. Mention that you have herpes and the location that you have it in and ask them if that will be a problem. There should be no issues however the place may have some rules regarding if you have an active outbreak at the time of a service.

Remember that professional places, especially medical facilities should be non-judgemental regarding something as common as herpes. If you ever feel judged or uncomfortable, it is

completely okay to decline the service, switch providers, or choose a different facility. You are paying for a service, and you deserve to feel respected, welcomed, and safe.

Minors Disclosing To Parents or Other High School People:

When you are under the age of 18 telling a parent or guardian about your sexual activity may be something that makes you uncomfortable and in some cases unsafe depending on the relationship you have. While having a support system especially with someone that is a legal adult can be very helpful for not only medical reasons but mental health as well it is understandable that not everyone has adults in their life that are trustworthy, reliable, or understanding. It is best to find a trusted adult over the age of 18 (teacher, aunt or uncle, older sibling, family friend) if you are unable to seek help from your primary guardian or parent.

Similarly it can be hard when you are in a high school setting to know who to trust or how herpes will affect dating. Though any of the above tactics for disclosure may work in a high school setting there are some specifics that you may want to consider before disclosing in this specific setting.

For more information or tips for navigating herpes as a minor check out the **Guide Specifically For Minors With Herpes:**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cw3muEEh8PDMD58-SBcJGmLNLI-UonCkTftacv_ZsJ0/edit?usp=sharing

Disclosing to Past Partners or Exes:

If you found out that you have herpes after you have ended it with a partner or in between partners and are unsure who gave it to you or who you may have exposed to herpes without knowing you may feel obligated to tell all your prior partners. This is **NOT** mandatory, or legally required in any way and in many cases not recommended. This is a very honorable and responsible thing to do **HOWEVER** proceed with caution. Contacting past partners can be a very dramatic thing depending on how things ended and adding bad news to the mix can make the encounter even worse. Things to remember before you immediately blame yourself for giving someone herpes or blaming a past partner for giving you herpes:

1. **There is no way to know where it originated from:** getting a positive herpes result especially if there are no symptoms present does not give you a timeline of who or where you got it from. Even with symptoms it is hard to pinpoint who had it first as herpes can remain dormant for years. The only way to know for sure who gave you herpes is if you had an IgG or Western Blot herpes test done **at least 14 weeks after your last encounter** with a previous partner, **before** engaging in any transmission-risk activities with anyone else (such as kissing or having oral, anal, or vaginal sex). If you were only with that one partner during that time and the test came back positive afterward, then that's the only way to confidently determine who transmitted it to you. Without following those testing steps there is no real way to know if you had it first or if your partner had it first.

2. **It is every person's job to get tested after a sexual partner:** just because you found out that you tested positive for herpes and it would be nice for you to notify anyone that you may have exposed it is not solely your responsibility. Anyone that is having sex is supposed to get tested after every partner and it is every new partner's job to ask questions about when the last time testing took place and STI status. So even if you do not notify all of your exes they should still be testing on their own.
3. **Transmission is not inevitable:** just because you found out you have herpes does not mean that every person that you had any type of skin-to-skin contact with now has it. While herpes is contagious it is not guaranteed to transmit every time that you have any type of sex or kiss someone. Herpes is most contagious during an outbreak and people who have never had an outbreak are much less likely to transmit. So do not beat yourself up thinking that you are a super spreader that “contaminated” everyone around you.
4. **Just because you found out that you had it doesn't mean that you had it first:** many people automatically believe because they tested positive and the other person did not tell you they had it that they must have brought it into the relationship.

This is not true, many people with herpes may:

- Not know that they had it as many individuals are asymptomatic (never showing any signs or symptoms), and herpes is not included on a standard STI panel meaning that they may have had a STI panel ran and not realized that a herpes test was not included and assumed that they were clear of all STIs.
- Been told by their doctor that they did not have to disclose their herpes status. Some doctors tell their patients that disclosure is unnecessary if the person is on daily antivirals or has HSV-1 as it is so common. Because of this some individuals do not realize the importance of disclosing or think that they aren't able to transmit as the doctors led them to believe that it wasn't possible while on antivirals or without an outbreak.
- Have been misinformed about how herpes spreads so they thought that they did not have to disclose as there was no outbreak present at the time of the encounter. The consistent spread of misinformation around herpes can lead to a lack of disclosure as people think that antivirals will fully prevent transmission, condoms will fully prevent transmission, that transmission is only possible if there are symptoms present or that Cold Sores are not herpes and therefore cannot spread to genitals or are something that do not need to be disclosed.
- Be lying to you entirely. The past partner could have known that they had herpes and been aware that they should have been disclosing their status and choose not to out of fear or rejection or just assuming that you would not get it as they took precautions and the risk of transmission was low.

5. **The person that you may have given herpes to would tell you:** Usually if you slept with someone and gave them herpes or symptoms of herpes the partner would not be shy about it and contact you right away bringing it up. They would either be concerned or angry about it but would reach out in some way. If they haven't contacted you they most likely have not seen any symptoms. (Yes herpes can be symptomless however if they did not have symptoms there is no telling who had it first and who gave it to whom).

Before you decide to contact your past partners and tell them the news, make sure that it is safe to do so for your physical and mental well being. Proceed with caution as the person that you are telling can be upset, angry and quick to blame you immediately. In many cases they will not listen to facts or reason and may accuse you of cheating on them or ruining their life prior to even getting tested. In some cases they may even talk about it with mutual friends so weigh all the options and scenarios in your head prior to sending a mass text to any one that you came in contact with. The second that you text people admitting that you tested positive the other person will assume that you gave it to them regardless of the facts and there is no reason to bring that upon yourself for trying to do the right thing.

Safe Ways To Notify Past Partners Anonymous:

There are anonymous texting sites that will tell anyone you were in contact with to get tested for various STD's. Some of the sites require you to download an app, others cost a small fee but all are safe ways for you to notify partners while not revealing your identity to lower the chance of drama or unnecessary contact with an ex.

If you really want to let people know safely and drama free you can use websites such as:

Love Hurts: lovehurts.com Anonymous STI partner notifications delivered with compassion, privacy and zero judgement. This is a **FREE** app service that will notify your partner. The only annoying part is that both you and the partner have to sign up for the app to send and see the message. The app offers information on all STIs for your partner to look at. Once you sign up for the app you can select the STI from the list (herpes is included) and then enter your partner's phone number. Your partner will receive the following text:

"Love Hurts: Health Alert Service

We are an anonymous and educational text messaging platform for sexual health. Someone who self-identified as your recent sexual partner would like to notify you of a possible health related exposure. Please log in to the Love Hurts app to view your message.

Download App lovehurts.com

Wishing you good health,

The Love Hurts Team

Text STOP to opt-out.

The person has to download the app and make an account to see the message:

Hey Your partner's name

Someone who self-identified as your recent sexual partner has chosen to notify you of a possible exposure to Herpes-Genital, a common STI.

You can learn more about the disease and treatment options on our platform. You can also contact your healthcare provider.

Early detection and treatment can prevent serious complications and transmission to others.

Wishing you good health,

The Love Hurts Team

Tell Your Partner. Org: <https://tellyourpartner.com/notify/> Anonymously Text a Partner About an STI Discreetly notify a partner with an anonymous STI text. Keep your identity private and let them know to get tested. This service costs \$2.99 per partner and sends a text message where you can select from a list of STIs including herpes to specifically notify your partner. The message will read

"Your partner's name, this is a message from TellYourPartner. One of your partners has anonymously notified us that you could have been exposed to Herpes. We recommend you get tested."

STD Check. Org: <https://www.stdcheck.com/anonymous-notification.php> Anonymous STD Text Send a text message or email to let your partner know it is time to get tested. You can enter your partner's phone number or email address. It costs around \$1.99 per partner but it is anonymous so you get to notify your partner while removing the drama leaving the ball in their court to use the information as they see fit. The text message for this site is a bit vague:

"STDCheck.com - A partner tested positive for an STD & recommends that you also get tested. For details, visit [STDcheck.com/notify.php](https://www.stdcheck.com/notify.php). Reply STOP to never receive these messages again."

Ways to Bring Up The Conversation To An Ex

Remember this is not something that is required of you and do not start this conversation if it will put you in an unsafe situation in any way. However if you have a good relationship with your past partners and would like to have an actual conversation with them or you think that your ex was the one who gave it to you and you want to confront them remember to not **expect too much from their response**. This is new territory for everyone involved. The person you're telling is human too, and while this situation may feel raw and emotional for you, it may also be difficult for them. Their initial response might not be ideal; they may react with surprise, denial, or even silence. Some people need time to process before they can respond thoughtfully. It's completely valid if you feel angry, hurt, or decide you don't want further contact after that

conversation. But try not to go into this interaction expecting them to have the perfect words or solution to make you feel better. It takes time to cope, adapt to the news and get back to your original self. Instead, focus on what helps *you* move forward. Learning more about herpes, connecting with others who understand, and joining a support group will often bring more peace and closure than confronting your “gifter.” For information regarding support groups and herpes in general see the **Herpes Resource Guide**

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uR26z9eFLAoRg2a_wG6NvrrukbQGmMT18UMFpK9-qgl/edit?usp=sharing

Here are a few ways to start the conversation:

To Someone You Are Unsure If They Gave It To You

- 1. Mention your symptoms:** if you are experiencing symptoms of any kind after an encounter with a partner you may have brought it up to them in passing during regular conversation. You may have mentioned feeling sick, having a rash or needing to go to a doctor. If you did this you can bring it back up and say something like: ***“Remember when I said I wasn’t feeling well, well I went to a doctor and got tested and they seem to think that it was herpes and after testing it was confirmed that I am HSV positive”.***
- 2. Use routine testing as a start up:** If you are someone who gets routine testing done after all of your partners (or even if you don’t you can always fudge the truth as a conversation starter). Text a past partner ***“So I get routinely tested after all my sexual partners and this past time I got tested it came back positive. I am not sure if you were the one who gave it to me or if I had it before you as the doctor told me herpes can remain dormant and the testing isn’t super accurate. I just wanted to let you know so that you can get tested before being with anyone else”.***
- 3. If you are unsure if they lied to you:** Bring up that you are having symptoms that are similar to herpes and see their reaction. You can sometimes use how they react as a clue to determine if they knew about it beforehand or if they are just as surprised as you are. Some partners will even confess out of guilt at the mere mention of you having symptoms. If they get very defensive, angry or start to blame you before you even mention a positive test and only mention symptoms then you know that if you blame them for giving it to you or actually disclose that you have herpes it will not go well for you. You can always text them back and say that it was a false alarm and that the test was negative to keep yourself safe and use one of anonymous texting apps later on to tell them.
- 4. Ask them if they have ever been tested for herpes before you:** bring up in casual conversation that you went to get a STI panel done after your encounter and were told that herpes isn’t normally included in a standard panel, ask them if they were aware of that and if they have ever been tested. If they get defensive that is a bad sign if they are unsure tell them that they should get tested as you came back positive and are not sure who you got it from.

To Someone You Think Gave It To You & You Want To Confront Them

It is important to understand that while confronting the person that gave you herpes may seem like a good idea and may be cathartic in a way in many cases it will leave you feeling worse than before. Think about what you are hoping to get out of the interaction and if the person that you are confronting is mature enough to give it to you. The person may be angry and accusatory of you. This is what happened to me even with overwhelming evidence of who gave it to me my ex denied it and blamed me for bringing it into the relationship and told me that I “ruined his life” which was very hard to hear when I was already blaming myself for getting it due to lack of education on both of our parts.

For the best results for closure:

- **Avoid approaching them with anger:** even though you are probably angry and want to yell at someone if you approach a partner or ex angrily and yelling they are more likely to get defensive and angry back. This will lead to them to more likely deny that they have it without even getting tested. Calm and clear communication will get you further if what you want is acknowledgment or honesty.
- **Avoid coming at them super emotional:** coming to them in hysterics or freaking out will have them mirroring that emotion and they will be less likely to listen to you and more likely to freak out as well. This can also lead to them being angry or upset with the messenger and taking out their emotions on you this can quickly spiral into chaos or hurtful exchanges. Ground yourself first; this conversation doesn't need to happen in the heat of emotion.
- **Pick the right time:** Try to not call or text them in the middle of the workday or while they are busy. Start by sending them a preliminary text asking for them to call you or text you when they are free so that they are not distracted or around other people who can weigh in and give opinions before the partner even has time to process the information. This should be a conversation for only the 2 of you and it is unfair to force someone to have a serious or emotional conversation while they are in the middle of something else.
- **Remember that they may have not known:** it may be a knee jerk reaction to think that your partner knew and lied to you or even gave it to you on purpose and while that may be the case that is not the only way you could have gotten herpes. You may be telling them for the first time that they have been exposed or that they have herpes. There are many situations where the person had no idea that they had it and accidentally transmitted it. If you come at them aggressive or angry it will be just as devastating as when you found out. Lead with kindness and concern over blame and anger. Most people with herpes are asymptomatic (show no signs or symptoms), herpes is not included in standard testing and there is so much misinformation surrounding herpes especially oral cold sores so there is a good chance that the person who gave it to you genuinely had no idea that they even had it.

- **If you caught them lying to you about having herpes they are not suddenly going to feel apologetic:** if you caught them lying about having herpes like finding their antiviral medication or seeing a text or message about it they actively chose to lie to you. There is a very low chance that they are suddenly going to be apologetic or give you the closure that you are looking for. Most likely you will get excuses and apologies that they got caught. They will use guilt trip tactics like : ***“I just liked you so much I was afraid you would reject me if I told you”*** or ***“I am on antivirals and used a condom so I didn’t think that I had to disclose”*** or ***“you never asked me about it so you are also at fault here”*** or even something like ***“Its just herpes its super common I didn’t think it was a big deal”*** your feelings are valid and you have a right to be upset or angry essentially a person that you trusted lied to you even if you didn’t ask it is still their responsibility to tell you if they knew. No matter how upset you act towards them you cannot force people to feel sorry or give you the closure that you are searching for. It is best to just leave it and move on.

Responses That You May Get:

Acceptance:

Double Disclosure: the person you disclose to may already have herpes or another STI or another “thing” that they were worried about disclosing to you. When you bring up the conversation and open up yourself to be vulnerable with a potential partner you will be surprised how many times relief fills them and they tell you something that they were worried about disclosing to you. Sometimes it’s herpes, other times it's things like that they are overcoming something like addiction, have a birth defect, have kids, etc.

Pure Acceptance: the person you disclose to has experience with herpes and is pre-educated. They thank you for disclosing and explaining that they already know a lot about it and aren't worried. Do not be worried if they do not ask a lot or even any questions. This doesn't mean that they are blowing you off, it just means that they already know the answers and are ready to move forward with you. If you are still in your head about it and feel uncomfortable not having a more in depth conversation about your diagnosis tell them that. Say ***“I just want to make sure that you understand everything and are you sure you don’t have any questions for me?”*** Reiterating that you are open for questions will allow them to reassure you or ask any further questions they may have.

Open To It But Uninformed: This is the most common response. Someone who is willing to learn and is curious but has little to no experience with herpes. These disclosures usually go a little longer as there are many questions. Do not be alarmed if the person needs time to digest the information or if they are asking seemingly disrespectful questions (use your best judgment about tone and intention and do not allow them to be disrespectful) however remember you may be a little sensitive and the potential partner is put on the spot they may unintentionally ask something that seems hurtful but they did not mean it that way. Politely tell them ***“I will answer that question this one time but going forward can you be more mindful on how you ask questions next time as this is not super easy for me to talk about. I am happy to be open***

and honest with you and give you all the information I have but try to be more sensitive on how you are asking me things” Also if they need time to process that is okay however they should not ghost you or leave you on read. They may need a break from the herpes conversation specifically but they should still respect you. If they go days without any communication that is a Red Flag and a sort of quiet ghosting. It is an immature response to a mature conversation and unless previously discussed that you will not speak for X amount of time should not be tolerated. It is also a sign of an immature partner that cannot discuss real or important topics in the future.

Proceed With Caution:

The I Trust You: the person is uninformed but asks you no questions and just says “***I trust you***” this may sound good in theory but in reality they are pushing all the work and responsibility on you. If you do everything in your power to prevent transmission but it still passes to your partner who has done no research or asked no questions they will blame you 100%. This is unfair to you. Having sex is a mutual agreement. If they were concerned about herpes they had the opportunity to ask you questions and do their own research. Do not let them push all the responsibility on you. If they say something like ***I trust you....*** Respond with “***I appreciate your confidence in me but this needs to be something you understand before I move forward with you. I do not feel comfortable going forward if you do not understand exactly what is going on as this is a mutual agreement and sometimes something out of my control***”

The Blow Off: some partners do not like to be in uncomfortable situations so rather than have the conversation they pivot the conversation in a different direction without really addressing it or they downplay what you are saying without a discussion. “***That's what condoms are for right?***” or “***As long as you aren't having an outbreak we are fine***” and then they move on quickly. This is expressing a lack of understanding of herpes and you should really circle back and help educate them on the risks. Sometimes these partners are trying to make you feel more comfortable while compromising their comfort which is nice but unproductive. Others think they are informed but there is so much misinformation out there they may be confused about the facts. Just answer with something like “***Yes condoms and not having sex without an outbreak will help but I want you to understand that there is a small chance even if we do all that.***” you can also add if you take antivirals “***There is actually a medication I take that is actually way more effective at preventing transmission than a condom***” you can also send them an information sheet to go over and reiterate that questions do not make you uncomfortable and you are open to answering all of them. The goal with these partners is not to scare them off but also not to let them go into a situation uninformed. So do not fearmonger them into being afraid of herpes.

The Endless Questioner: some uninformed people are scared of herpes but like you as a person and they are trying to ride the line of being with you while being afraid of HSV. These people may be exhausting and may try to push your comfort levels. It is okay to set boundaries and it is okay for you to tell them that you will no longer be answering questions. These partners may say things like “***I will do anything to be with you, I just want to be safe***” and then ask

you a million questions and repeatedly ask the same ones over and over for reassurance. The questions will have more of an asking out of fear vibe than an asking to get the facts. The conversations will feel very circular where you are answering the same question or same type of question over and over again and your partner will never seem fully satisfied with the answer. They may still date you but seem hesitant to do anything physical with you. Just because you have herpes and you are educating them doesn't mean that you need to rehash the same facts over and over again at some point it is okay to say something like ***"At this point I gave you all the information I have and you need to decide if this is something you would like to continue asking the same thing over and over will not change the answer here are some informational packets for you to look over if you have any other questions"*** and send them the link to one of the fact sheets.

Red Flag Acceptance:

The Wishy Washy Response: these are similar to the endless questioner (above) in that they seem to accept you but their actions do not really reflect acceptance. These partners will push boundaries and will never seem fully comfortable. This is a **RED FLAG** and is not something that you need to settle for. Partners like this will sometimes:

- They refuse or withhold physical affection out of fear of getting herpes.
- They may do things like only have sex but not perform oral.
- They may have sex but only with a condom fully clothed.
- They may try to convince you to only have sex in a shower or body of water.
- They may only want to finger or give a handjob with a glove on.
- They may have sex with you then immediately wash off or hand sanitize.

Any of the above is fine if both parties are comfortable with it and it was previously discussed sex is only fun if both parties are fully involved enthusiastically and not made out to feel like a biohazard. If at any point your partner is making you feel uncomfortable or pressured to do something that you aren't happy about, that is a full stop of sexual activity and you need to talk to them about it and discuss ways to make you both comfortable.

The One Who Consistently Needs Reassurance: Similar to the above they say that they accept you but they seem to be worried after every sexual occurrence or consistently check your or their body before and after sex to see if they caught it. They will say things like ***"Is this herpes"*** or every time after sex they will question you on ***"What are the chances that I got it"*** they will question every potential symptom and will constantly look to you for reassurance. This is also not a good way to have a relationship. This will involve a sit down conversation on what is acceptable for the both of you. There are many partners who are 100% accepting and there are people out there without herpes that may be a better fit for someone who is that concerned about getting it. There is also the option of refraining from sex entirely if you really want to be with this particular person until you reach a milestone that is acceptable for the both of you. For instance some couples wait until they are together X amount of years so the risk is "worth it for both of them" or wait until marriage etc.. This is a solution that can work for some couples but is not for everyone. Make sure that **BOTH** parties are comfortable with any decision that is made

regarding sex in your relationship as no one should have to make a major sacrifice in their sexual desires in order to be with someone else.

The Bug Chaser: this may sound insane but there are people out there who have an STI kink and are looking to get herpes from someone. This can look like you disclosing and them seeming excited to hear it. This isn't common but it is something to look out for. Look for people who seem obsessive about your herpes status and who ask strange questions about your outbreaks. They may ask to see an outbreak and they will try to pressure you to sleep with them during an outbreak. These people usually make themselves known early on as they hyper focus on herpes especially when talking about sex.

Power Moves: Some abusive partners look for any soft spot in a person to use as a means of control. Disclosing a herpes status especially in the beginning seems like an easy target for these types of abusers. They will throw your status in your face as if they are doing you a favor by staying with you being you have herpes and they do not. They will say things like ***“you're lucky I'm with you”*** or ***“no one else will accept you like I do”*** as a way to keep you in a relationship you would otherwise leave. They will also threaten to expose your status to others if you leave

Stuck With Me Now: These are similar to bug chasers but instead of being a fetish it's another means of control. These people will wait until the relationship is either ending or going through a rough patch. If an abusive partner is fearful that you are planning on leaving them they may go out of their way to attempt to catch your herpes as a way to make you feel guilty into staying with them. ***“You can't leave me now that you gave me this incurable STI”***. These people may suddenly want to stop using protection or try to convince you to stop taking medication. They may also say things like ***“I don't care if I get it being we will be together forever”*** or will try to convince you to look at, touch or have sex during your outbreak. Saying things like ***“it would just be easier for me to catch it now”*** or ***“I would rather catch it on purpose than be surprised later”***.

Rejections:

Before freaking out about potentially being rejected, remember that throughout a relationship many things could pop up that will require mature conversations. There are also many viruses, diseases and life circumstances that you or your partner can contract that could be contagious or can affect both of you. All of which will require communication, education, and mutual adaptation. Herpes is just one of many.

Being rejected for having herpes is not any reflection on you, your worth, your sexual desirability to others, or your moral character. It is more of a reflection of the other person's fear, lack of education, or maturity level. Any person that rejects you for something like herpes, especially without having a full conversation about it, is showing you that they are not prepared for a real relationship.

Try looking at being rejected as protection from investing in a partner who cannot meet you with empathy, maturity, or an open-mind. The right partner will not see herpes as a dealbreaker, but

as something for you to approach as a team. A healthy partner looks at the whole person, not just a single medical disclosure. If hearing that you have something as common as herpes is an immediate dealbreaker, especially without a conversation, that reaction says far more about their readiness and understanding than it does about you.

Types of Rejections:

Polite Rejection: This may be something like ***“Thank you for disclosing but I do not think this is something I am comfortable with”*** you have 2 options from here you can either just immediately accept their rejection or you can push a little to see why they are uncomfortable as it may just be a lack of education and they may not realize some of the facts. You can say something like ***“I completely respect your feelings, but would you be open to hearing a little more before making a final decision? A lot of people don’t realize that herpes is extremely common, and that with medication and precautions, the risk of transmission can be very low. If you’d rather not talk about it, I understand but I just wanted to offer you the chance to get the full picture.”*** This gives them the opportunity to ask some questions or say no thanks. Partners who are not open to learning tend to not be great partners in general so their answer can show you that you dodged a bullet.

Ghosting: there will be partners who after a disclosure will just disappear or even fade out. These can start off as acceptance or just a ghost out of nowhere. Slow ghosting can look like ***“Thank you for telling me that’s fine”*** but the messages slowly stop or they change tone. They are suddenly too busy to hangout or they no longer are looking for the type of relationship they originally told you they were looking for. It is important to remember:

- On dating apps especially people get ghosted daily for things other than herpes.
- On dating apps especially people are talking to multiple people at a time and make snap judgements on who to stop talking to constantly so yes herpes may have been a reason for them for you in particular but for a different person it may be political affiliation, that they have kids, that they do not go to the gym etc. so try not to take it personally.
- People who ghost are extremely immature and there is never an acceptable reason to just stop talking to someone **ESPECIALLY** someone who brought up a mature topic that can protect them. A polite no thank you or asking questions would be an appropriate response. Ghosting just shows you the type of person that they are and that they are unable to have adult mature conversations.

Mean Rejections: this does not happen often and especially does not happen if you disclosed prior to any risky behavior but there are some highly immature and uneducated people that may say something insulting. Immediately block them and move on. You are not required to stick around in a conversation that is rude or insulting. If they say anything along the lines of ***“No way cause I’m clean”*** or ***“that’s gross/ disgusting”*** there is no need to even give them a response. You went out of your way to tell a potential partner something to give them information and a choice that in many cases you yourself did not have. You were mature and responsible and this person showed you their true colors right out the gate. Anyone that responds to a herpes disclosure with name calling or negativity would be a terrible partner to have even as just a hook up buddy.

- What if a pregnancy resulted from the encounter would they be a good co-parent?
- Do they seem open to having mature conversations outside of STIs?
- Do they even seem like someone who knows anything about STIs or is willing to learn?
- Do you think they've been tested recently or even understand how STI testing works?

Most likely not. By disclosing, you demonstrated maturity, honesty, and integrity. Their rejection reveals that they lack those same qualities and that makes them unworthy of your time or energy.

Herpes Fact Sheets:

- **Myths About Herpes:** this is a list of the most common herpes myths and why most of them are wrong with scientific cited sources. This can help answer any questions your partner may have with no uncertainty.
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-6oZmnfywTFNYSckYKC7Mh7MXZKrA0GUcztS8Bz5bW0k/edit>
- **How To Lower Transmission:** This is a list of ways to help protect your partner. There are many precautions you can take to help keep your partner safe!
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10ccLJMnXAkUkfpU5ng9-1CiWXGPTYYPfDOCvxeB4GX4/edit>
- **PinkTent.com:** Herpes Fact Sheet by Dr. Kelly Martin Schuh
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1njlhgbXCIVMaPYwIFgrUKB68q6oL5TWY/view?usp=sharing>
- **Herpes Myths vs Facts:** The New Zealand Herpes Foundation put together a very comprehensive common myths about herpes list that can also be used to answer common questions partners may ask. <https://www.herpes.org.nz/herpes-patient-info/myths-vs-facts>
 - **Myth Vs Facts New Zealand Herpes Foundation:** a list of common herpes myths to show your partner. In a simple PDF Handout.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/11OEdgcTeAZ0gZdVf5J8RQmCrCe0s96as/view?usp=sharing>
- **The WHO's Fact Sheet:** Similar to the CDC detailed sheet. The CDC one has a (in my opinion) better layout.
<https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/herpes-simplex-virus>
- **The Herpes Handbook:** by Terri Warren, a foremost HSV expert. This handbook and her website are fantastic sources of data.
<https://westoverheights.com/herpes/the-updated-herpes-handbook/>
- **How To Tell Your Partner You Have Herpes:** Health Central has many articles to help navigate herpes, with easy to read herpes facts that would be great for you and your partner to look through.
 - **General Herpes Overview:**
<https://www.healthcentral.com/article/genital-herpes-the-basics>

- **Difference Between HSV-1 & HSV-2:**
<https://www.healthcentral.com/article/the-difference-between-herpes-viruses-hsv-1-hsv-2>
- **HSV & Oral Sex:**
<https://www.healthcentral.com/article/the-truth-about-hsv1-hsv2-and-oral-sex>
- **Disclosure Tips For All STDs:**
<https://www.healthcentral.com/article/i-have-an-std-should-i-tell-my-partner>
- **Outbreak Prevention Tips:**
<https://www.healthcentral.com/article/10-ways-to-prevent-herpes-outbreaks>
- **Cleveland Clinic Overview:** Very similar to the CDC Basic fact sheet even has a similar layout just from a different source.
<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/22855-herpes-simplex>
- **SHINE Genital Herpes Fact Sheet:** gives a full overview of genital herpes in a 2 page sheet.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PCVVkGxgf-ovsJ_77TV_gjRn9kkgzJ3T/view?usp=sharing
- **The Facts New Zealand Herpes Foundation:** a pamphlet that goes over all the generalized facts about herpes.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EI2mbRMPG8mA5zdo0rG83fwiRTmfTMaS/view?usp=drive_link
- **Herpes Goddess Video:** Herpes Goddess is a herpes coach who made a video to send to partners that gives an overview on herpes and how it pertains to them
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/ptXHhFmYXqSQJTdo7>

HSV Transmission Rates Between Sexual Partners:

These are all the transmission statistics I can find, it is important to note that transmission rates and viral shedding rates are very hard to measure so these charts should **NOT** be taken at 100%. Shedding varies from person to person and sometimes daily. This is just an estimation hence why some percentages have such a wide range.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xRL3jM3qLB5nh-b2B7tXOU2wrRoPgXclFBu7ICGpkbl/edit?usp=sharing>

Positive Disclosure Stories:

Positive Herpes Stories: These are a bunch of positive stories about herpes that I have found on Reddit. Reddit can be great for information and finding others who are going through the same thing that you are but sometimes it can be filled with a lot of negativity and newly diagnosed people who are confused and scared. I put together a bunch of the more positive posts that I could find about living, dating and thriving with herpes. Things to read when you feel alone or hopeless.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11sLzFHVpTWhNCzRSPgqp9pwPqzFrPiwHWJRO83j980M/edit?usp=sharing>

Transmission Prevention:

For anyone who has HSV, these are the things you can do to reduce the risk of transmitting:

1. For genital herpes never have sex (receiving oral or penetrative) during an outbreak. For oral avoid kissing or giving oral sex during an outbreak.
2. Check your body carefully to make sure you don't have anything that may be an OB. Look for red or raised bumps, cuts, tears in skin.
3. Don't have sex with your partner is sick/ immune system isn't great.
4. Don't have sex if you feel nerve pain as this may be shedding (tingling sensations, dull aches, or itchiness in the skin area that usually gets the outbreaks).
5. Take daily antivirals / supplements and make sure you have been on them for at least 5 days prior to any sex.
6. Use condoms / dental dams (this reduces transmission not 100% effective)
7. Practice open and honest communication with your partners, disclose your status, discuss potential outbreak/ shedding symptoms, and precautions you are taking.

A more detailed list can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10ccLJMnXAKuKfpU5ng9-1CiWXGPTYYPfDOCvxeB4GX4/edit>

Also make sure that you disclose your status before having any sex

- A 1992 study ^{Mertz} tracked couples with a (symptomatic) HSV2 positive and negative partner having sex for a year. 10% of couples transmitted (17% from male and 4% from female). Most of these occurred without an outbreak. Women who already had HSV1 were over three times less likely to contract HSV2.
- Suppressive antivirals reduce HSV2 transmission by 48% ^{Herpes Handbook, Johnston}. Condom use reduces transmission by 96% from a positive male partner and by 30-50% by a positive female partner ^{Herpes Handbook}.

TikTok Disclosure Videos:

I have saved relevant TikTok videos to albums on Google as the links to direct videos on TikTok do not always work, the creators could take them down /change them and many people do not have a TikTok account to properly view the videos. This is just an easier way to keep the videos organized and to guarantee that the link will directly take you to the correct videos.

1. **PickeringFitness:** this is a male with HSV-2
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/fXRmy7Z7HNEun3Ri6>
2. **Bubblieinblu** female with oral and genital HSV-1
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/6zUHmPvdiKDSTVCPA>
3. **stephanielboyd_:** life coach HSV-2: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/htTn7GeqGQoznZ8H9>
4. **Yoninutritionist:** female with HSV-1 & HSV-2:
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/DcHwcCGouYcVeWvH6>
5. **Suzbub:** female HSV-2: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/PX6GhMmsPH2fY4wq6>
6. **Bek Antonucci:** female: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/YypnXVJnkKbkqzUX6>
7. **SafeSlut:** female HSV-2: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/xWjzBi7NxSNBsg4z5>
8. **Vero.Venturing:** female with HSV-2: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/2rLMaLEpDXf5SRhq9>
9. **HerpesGoddess:** female HSV-2: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/j633QCeEuHafAppZ8>
10. **LifeWithHerpes:** female HSV-2: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/VARjQqcBsJTrhMQU9>
11. **YourInnerSparkpod:** <https://photos.app.goo.gl/KqfTVbQUCRhUhoyz7>
12. **HealingSam:** female with HSV-2: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/4CuBWGtDYiVZkuAn6>

Youtube Disclosure Videos:

1. **Ask Ella:** How do I tell someone I have herpes?
<https://elladawson.com/2020/08/14/ask-ella-how-do-i-tell-someone-i-have-herpes>
2. **Pickering Fitness:** My #1 HERPES DISCLOSURE Tip! + many other videos on HSV
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOqyhLdOK04>
3. **PositivelyPositive Podcast:** Ep. 10 Herpes Disclosure Tips & Tricks (also listed in the podcast section) <https://youtu.be/JnFEIO8Pd5o?si=enALa4TJDawrbdXK>
4. **Herpes Goddess:** Does Timing Matter? When to Share Your Positive Status
<https://youtu.be/kOYTWEXX2nI?si=7PUweLLsXVPInBxi>
5. **Life With Herpes:** Herpes disclosure with Alexandra Harbushka
<https://youtube.com/shorts/WahlZT2RL94?si=iFU5Z1mZ3akA2-MG>
6. **Watch Amber:** Disclosing I have herpes: <https://youtu.be/otXZKZq3FAk?si=KJaY-ez1wMqTLMbb>

Podcasts About Disclosure:

1. How to tell people you have herpes in 5 steps: Preparation, Timing, Phrasing, Results and Aftercare/Moving On! The PositivelyPositive Podcast:
https://open.spotify.com/episode/3NAXcZVxAHVENXZ1Mgqdpd?si=u6PhHBATRPYJYMzfIP_Yg
2. In this episode, Josie gives her tips on how to tell a potential partner you have herpes. Manifesting Sh*t With Josie:
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/50BYdccVcUWFubAZ8HCdJ7?si=a8rEyHH1RbCMp7poRE65UQ>
3. In the Life With Herpes community, the number one question I get has to do with dating. The questions range from will I ever date again, will anyone ever love me, how do I tell my partner and anything in between.
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/0C2feQJ6QKIPpN5FQLzSn?si=2eFgH01VT2mohBLp6lvRnQ>

Herpes Dating / Transmission Myths:

This is a list of common myths about herpes and why they are wrong with cited sources. There are specific sections for dating and transmission myths.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-6oZmnfywTFNYSckYc7Mh7MXZKrA0GUcztS8Bz5bW0k/edit?usp=sharing>

Social Medias About Herpes:

This is a list of social Medias about herpes. Sometimes it does people good to see people being public about it and the amount of support they receive from strangers. The accounts are funny and informative and all herpes positive. There is everything on there from podcasts, YouTube, TikToks, blogs, Facebook support groups, Instagram pages, dating pages, subreddits, and websites. <https://sites.google.com/view/social-media-about-herpes/social-medias>

Dating With Herpes Guide:

Dating Guide: You did the hard part: you disclosed your herpes status and the person has accepted your disclosure. Now you are unsure where to go from here and may be still concerned that the person made the “wrong choice” by being with you, or you are unsure how to keep that partner safe or how to navigate dating with herpes. This is the guide for you.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/12loz28ql8CYzmpxG9EMaeYrTZZB9c_jQf7aka2dslms/edit?usp=sharing

If you have any further questions or if any of the source links no longer work you can reach the creator of this document on Instagram: [Bubblieinblu](#) Reddit:

[Mylovelyadylumps69](#) or TikTok: [Bubblieinblu](#)

This document was last updated on 04/17/2026.