

# Herpes Simplex Keratitis

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This material will help you understand keratitis that is caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV) and how it may be treated.

## **What is herpes simplex keratitis?**

Herpes simplex keratitis is an infection of the cornea that results from the herpes simplex virus (HSV). The cornea is the part of the eye that is most commonly affected by HSV. The cornea is the clear window in the front of the eye. It helps focus light into the eye. When the cornea is inflamed, it can cause pain and blurred vision. If not treated, herpes simplex can lead to severe eye damage.

There are two types of HSV that can both lead to keratitis. Type I is the most common. It mainly affects the face, causing the familiar “cold sore” or “fever blister.” Type I is usually responsible for herpes simplex eye diseases, as well. About 90% adults have contracted HSV Type I, even if they have never had symptoms of an infection. Type II is the sexually transmitted form of herpes.

Because the HSV remains in your body, your symptoms may reappear at any time.

Herpes simplex keratitis is commonly called eye herpes.

## **What are the symptoms of herpes simplex keratitis?**

Usually only one eye is affected by herpes simplex. Symptoms of this infection may include:

- Blurred vision

- Eye pain
- Eye redness
- Sensitivity to light
- Tearing
- Blisters or ulcers on the eyelids

The symptoms described above do not mean that you have herpes simplex keratitis. However, if you have a history of herpes simplex or experience one or more of these symptoms, you should see your eye doctor for a complete exam.

### **How is herpes simplex keratitis treated?**

Depending on the nature of your infection, there are a few treatment options. For mild cases, your doctor may prescribe antiviral eye drops and/or oral medicines. If there is inflammation, your doctor may prescribe steroid eye drops. Severe infections can cause scarring on your cornea and lead to vision loss. In these cases, a corneal transplant may be needed to improve vision.

You and your doctor will discuss the treatment that is best for you.

There is no complete cure for herpes. To help prevent future outbreaks, you should:

- Avoid touching your eyes if you have an active cold sore or blister
- Stop wearing contact lenses if you keep getting infections
- See your eye doctor right away if symptoms return

**For more information, scan these codes with your smartphone or visit the websites listed.**



<http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/herpes-simplex.html>



<http://www.geteyesmart.org/eyesmart/diseases/herpes-keratitis.cfm>

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