

Herpes Gingivostomatitis

Definition

- A viral infection of the mouth and lips in young children

Health Information

Symptoms

- Many small water blisters inside the mouth on the gums, tongue and lips. They quickly break open and become small mouth ulcers (sores)
- The gums are very red and can bleed easily.
- Ulcers also occur on the outer lips or skin around the mouth.
- The ulcers occur equally on both sides of the mouth and lips.
- The ulcers cause pain that interferes with feeding and swallowing. Poor fluid intake can lead to dehydration.
- Lymph nodes in the neck are usually swollen and tender.
- Fever present and may last 5 days.
- Usually occurs age 1 to 3.

Cause

- Herpes Simplex Virus type 1. The first infection with HSV1 can be severe
- It usually follows contact with someone who has active cold sores (fever blisters). Often they have kissed the child.

Prevention of Spread to Others

- Herpes virus is easily spread to other children who have not had it.
- The virus is mainly found in the saliva and the sores.
- Avoid sharing drinking glasses or eating utensils. Avoid kissing.
- Also avoid sharing toys with other children. Reason: most young children put toys in their mouth.
- The mouth sores are contagious for about 7 days.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- The first infection with the Herpes virus can be severe.
- The mouth ulcers make it hard for your child to drink and eat normally.
- Your main job is to help your child drink enough fluids.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Liquid Antacid for Mouth Pain:

- For mouth pain, use a liquid antacid such as Mylanta or the store brand. Give 4 times per day as needed. After meals often is a good time. Age: Use for children over 1 year old.
- For children over age 6, can use 1 teaspoon (5 ml) as a mouth wash. Keep it on the ulcers as long as possible. Then can spit it out or swallow it.
- For younger children age 1 to 6, put a few drops in the mouth. Can also put it on with a cotton swab.
- Caution: Do not use regular mouth washes, because they sting.

3. **Avoid Numbing Medicines:**
 - Do not use numbing medicines. Reason: They only work for about 20 minutes.
 - Also, during that time your child may chew on their lip by mistake.
 - They may also cause your child to choke and other side effects.
4. **Pain Medicine:**
 - To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.
5. **Fever:**
 - For fevers above 102° F (39° C), give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Note: Lower fevers are important for fighting infections.
 - For ALL fevers: Keep your child well hydrated. Give lots of cold fluids.
6. **Anti-Viral Drug by Mouth:**
 - Oral anti-viral medicine can help the sores go away faster if started early. That usually means within 3 days of when the infection started.
 - If your doctor has prescribed an anti-viral drug, take it as advised.
 - Try not to forget any of the doses.
7. **Antibiotics Not Needed:**
 - Antibiotics are not helpful for viral infections.
 - They can only kill bacteria.
8. **Fluids and Soft Diet:**
 - Try to get your child to drink adequate fluids.
 - Goal: keep your child well hydrated.
 - Cold drinks, milk shakes, popsicles, slushes, and sherbet are good choices.
 - **Solids.** Offer a soft diet. Also avoid foods that need much chewing. Avoid citrus, salty, or spicy foods. Note: Fluid intake is more important than eating any solids.
 - For babies, offer fluids in a cup, spoon or syringe rather than a bottle. Reason: The nipple may increase pain.
9. **What to Expect:**
 - Fever usually lasts 3 to 5 days.
 - Mouth pain lasts 5 to 7 days.
 - The mouth sores heal up in 10 to 14 days.
10. **Return to Child Care or School:**
 - Older children can return to school after the fever is gone.
 - Younger children who can't stop touching their mouth need to stay home for 7 days.
 - Also, they need to avoid sharing toys with other kids for a week.

Call Your Doctor If

- Trouble breathing occurs
- Your child can't drink enough fluids
- Fever lasts more than 5 days
- Mouth ulcers last more than 2 weeks
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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