



What are Cold Sores and what causes them?

A cold sore is a small sore or blister-like lesion on the face or inside of the mouth. They are caused by the herpes simplex virus. They usually cause pain, a burning sensation or itching before they burst and crust over. Most commonly they occur on the lips, chin, cheeks, inside of the nostrils and sometimes on the gums or the roof of the mouth.

Cold sores are not the same as canker sores, although they are often mistaken for one another. A canker sore is a small ulcer crater in the lining of the mouth and it is often painful. Canker sores occur in the soft tissue of the mouth, where cold sores do not appear. Cold sores are quite common. The cold sore virus, known as herpes simplex virus, is a highly contagious and easily transmittable virus that is often spread through close human-to-human contact. Most people are infected with the virus by the time they graduate high school. When it enters your system, for most of the time it remains inactive. Occasionally, however, certain triggers can activate the virus, resulting in a cold sore outbreak. Some people may carry the virus and never have an outbreak because it remains dormant all the time.

Now, what causes cold sores?

Cold sores are caused from the herpes simplex virus. This virus is easily transmittable and highly contagious. Herpes simplex virus is typically passed on in early childhood when a child is kissed by a person with a cold sore. Shared eating utensils, bathroom items, such as towels or razors, may also spread the infection. Once the virus has entered your system, it makes its way to the nerves and lies there dormant until some trigger activates it later on.

The following triggers are known to potentially activate the virus:

- Mental stress
- Deep sadness or upset
- An injury to the affected area
- Menstruation
- Intense Sun Exposure

Source: Nordqvist, C. (2014, September 26). What are cold sores? What causes cold sores? Retrieved May 13, 2015, from <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/172389.php>

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