

Kaiser Permanente

Cold Sores

Brief Version

What are cold sores?

When your child has cold sores, or fever blisters, you can expect to see:

- a cluster of small, painful bumps or blisters on the outer lip
- sores on one side of the mouth only *(usually)*
- tingling or burning on the outer lip at the same place the cold sores were before.

The herpes simplex virus causes cold sores. The sores happen the first time after getting it from someone who has herpes. After the first time, the virus lives inside the nerves of the skin. A few people get the cold sores again and again. The cold sores could come back because of things like being tired or having a sunburn or fever. *salty foods, acidic foods: oranges, pineapples*

How can I take care of my child?

Here's what you can do if your child gets cold sores:

- Get a special antiherpes ointment. ~~Your doctor must prescribe it.~~ *Over the counter*
- Put the ointment on the area as soon as you see any small bumps. This can shorten the time the sores last, if you use it early enough.
- Your child's ointment is Abreva or Zilactin
- Put it on 3 times a day for 5 days.
- It can help to use a lip balm with sunscreen to prevent flare-ups of cold sores.
- Don't touch the cold sores. They are contagious to others.

Call your child's doctor during office hours if:

- If there are any sores near the eye.
- The sores last longer than 2 weeks.
- You have questions about antiherpes ointments.
- You have other worries or questions.

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.

Special Instructions: