

Keep herpes away with facts

International Herpes Awareness Week delivers key information to a public that needs to know the truth

By Brooke Ross
Oregon Daily Emerald

Many people have no idea they are carrying a sexually transmitted disease, when in fact 9 out of 10 of sexually active people have been exposed to the herpes virus.

This is because the symptoms of the sexually transmitted virus are not always obvious. In an effort to improve awareness of herpes, the International Herpes Alliance designated Nov. 18-25 International Herpes Awareness Week.

“The best protection against herpes is to know your partner.”

Dr. Gerald Fleischli
director
University Health Center

The University Student Health Center offers several resources for students to defend themselves from herpes and learn more about the virus.

“The best protection against herpes is to know your partner,” said Dr. Gerald Fleischli, health center director.

Fleischli said the health center treats at least two cases of the sexually transmitted Herpes Simplex Virus 2 each week, but also said

there seems to be a greater awareness of herpes than there used to be.

“People have realized it’s definitely something to be concerned about,” he said, adding there are still some general misunderstandings about the virus. The most common misconception students seem to have is that they’re fully protected by using condoms, but this is not the case, he said, because there is still skin to skin contact involved.

“Sexual contact is definitely the [number] one way to contract herpes,” said Marjorie McDaniel, family nurse practitioner at the health center.

She said Herpes Simplex Virus 2 has no cure, and results in painful sores on or around the genitals. Herpes Simplex Virus 1 causes break outs of simple cold sores around the mouth.

A person can contract either type of herpes in either place because oral sex can pass on both forms, McDaniel said.

She added that it is also important that people seek treatment as soon as they believe they may have herpes, because sores can dry up after a few days and will not show in a herpes test even if a patient has the virus.

It’s difficult to determine when a patient first contracted herpes because a person can be infected long before they notice any symptoms, because the virus can hide in nerve bundles throughout the body, McDaniel said.

Students can take a herpes test at the health center which involves scraping sores with a cotton

Facts about herpes

International Herpes Awareness Week is Nov. 18-25.

There is no cure for the Herpes Simplex Virus 1 or 2.

Using condoms does not always prevent the contraction of Herpes Simplex Virus 2.

Herpes outbreaks are triggered by weak immune systems, poor nutrition, stress and lack of sleep.

More than 90 percent of people have herpes antibodies in their blood.

Students can be tested for the herpes virus at the University Student Health Center.

swab to find any viral particles, McDaniel said. Those particles are then cultured to determine results.

McDaniel said students should be aware of herpes because few people escape contact with the virus in their lifetimes. Nearly 90 percent of people have the antibodies in their blood, she said, which means they have been exposed to herpes.

Cindy Smith, an adult nurse practitioner at the health center, said many students are infected but don’t know it.

“I think there’s more sexually transmitted diseases out there than most people realize,” Smith said.

One way students can protect themselves is by seeking general medical checkups, she said, adding there are also certain antiviral medications that can help control herpes outbreaks.

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Due to the nation wide shortage of flu vaccine, the University Health Center will be giving flu vaccinations according to the following CDC guidelines.

- ✓ 65 years and older
- ✓ adults who have chronic disorders such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease and/or kidney dysfunction
- ✓ women who are in their second or third trimester of pregnancy

Students meeting the criteria may receive the vaccine Monday through Friday 9am to 4pm.

Faculty and staff meeting the criteria may receive the vaccine Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday 8am to 9am.

Students \$4.00
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For more information on availability of vaccine and plans for flu clinics, call the University Health Center at 346-4444.

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