

SKIN AND SOFT TISSUE INFECTIONS

Herpes Simplex Virus

Cold Sores:

- **Most cold sores resolve after 5 days without treatment.**
- Paracetamol and/or ibuprofen can be used to treat symptoms of pain and fever, if needed,
- **Do not** routinely prescribe topical antiviral preparations as these are **available over the counter**.
- Topical antivirals applied before the cold sore appears can reduce the duration by 12–18 hours.
- Topical antivirals may reduce the duration of lesions but only if applied in the first 24-48 hours. They do not prevent recurrences.
- **If frequent, severe, or persistent:** consider oral antivirals for healthy people depending on clinical judgement. Repeat acute courses should not be made, consider referral to assess prophylaxis suitability.
- Prophylactic (suppressive) aciclovir can be considered case by case following investigation for any underlying immunodeficiency. Consider seeking specialist advice or referral to a specialist in infectious diseases, depending on clinical judgement.
- Seek specialist advice for immunocompromised patients, pregnant patients near term and neonates.
- [APC patient information leaflet](#).

Genital herpes:

- Consider referral to an Integrated Sexual Health clinic for diagnosis, treatment, contact tracing and STI screening.
- Seek specialist advice for pregnant women.
- Oral aciclovir can be used if within 5 days of onset. Dose below is for treatment of the first episode only.
- For treatment of recurrences, or for suppression, seek advice from Integrated Sexual Health centres.

Eczema herpeticum:

- Send a viral swab to confirm but start empirical treatment. If the patient is well with only localised disease, prescribe oral aciclovir as below.
- If a patient is systemically unwell or there is extensive involvement, refer to the on-call Dermatologist as patient may require increased dosing or IV antiviral treatment.
- If eczema herpeticum involves the skin around the eyes, the patient should be referred for **same-day** ophthalmological and dermatological advice.

Treatment ¹	Dose	Duration
Aciclovir	<i>Cold sores, genital herpes, and mild eczema herpeticum:</i> Child 1 – 23 months: 100mg 5 times a day Adults and children 2 years and over: 200mg 5 times a day OR 400mg three times a day	5 days 5 days
Valaciclovir (Only if compliance is likely to be poor. 10 times the cost of aciclovir)	<i>Cold sores and genital herpes:</i> Adults and children 12years and over: 500mg twice a day <i>Eczema herpeticum:</i> Adults and children 12years and over: 1g twice a day	5 days 5 days

¹See [BNF](#) and [BNFC](#) for appropriate use and dosing in specific populations, e.g., hepatic, or renal impairment, pregnancy, breastfeeding.