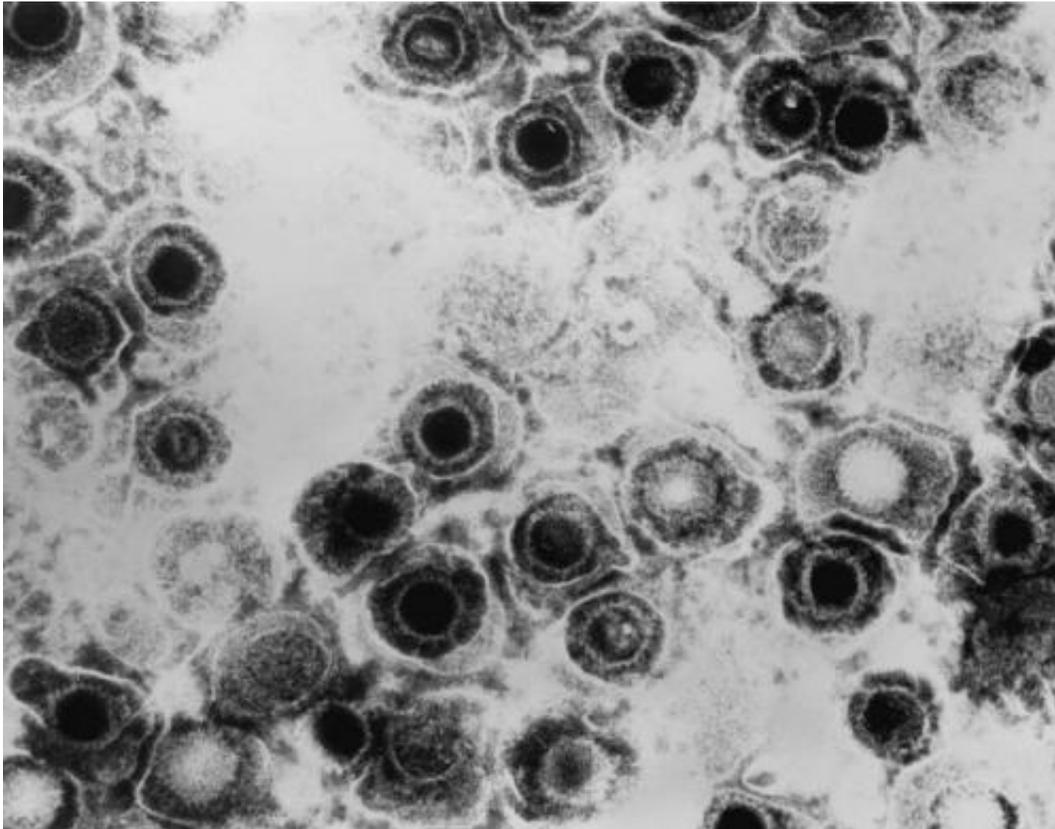


# Herpes infections take major economic toll globally, new research shows

July 1 2024

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Herpes simplex virus. Credit: CDC

Genital herpes infections and their related complications lead to billions of dollars in health care expenditures and productivity losses globally, according to the first ever global estimates of the economic costs of these conditions.

The paper, which was published July 1 in the journal *BMC Global and Public Health*, calls for greater investment in prevention of herpes transmission, including concerted efforts to develop effective vaccines against this common virus.

Corresponding author Nathorn Chaiyakunapruk, PharmD, Ph.D., professor of pharmacotherapy, and Haeseon Lee, PharmD, research fellow in pharmacotherapy, both at the College of Pharmacy of University of Utah Health, performed the research in collaboration with the World Health Organization and other academic institutions. They detail the associated economic cost estimates for [genital herpes](#) globally and by region.

Herpes is caused by infection with one of two types of the herpes simplex virus (HSV). Around two thirds of people (67%) aged 0–49 globally have HSV-1, according to the latest published statistics.

It is mostly acquired in childhood, spreads by oral contact and causes infections in or around the mouth (oral herpes or cold sores). Adults can acquire genital HSV-1 infection through [sexual contact](#) if they were not infected during childhood. Type 2 spreads by sexual contact and causes genital herpes. Approximately 13% of the world's population aged 15–49 years are living with HSV-2 infection.

In addition to sores and blisters, HSV can cause other more serious complications requiring health care attention, including a rare chance of mother to [child transmission](#) during childbirth, and increased risk of HIV infection.

**More information:** Estimated global and regional economic burden of genital herpes simplex virus infection among 15–49 year-olds in 2016, *BMC Global and Public Health* (2024). [DOI: 10.1186/s44263-024-00053-6](#)

More information on herpes: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/herpes-simplex-virus>

Provided by University of Utah Health Sciences

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