

Cold sores

Cold sores are a highly contagious viral infection. The initial infection usually occurs during childhood, probably by kissing an infected adult. Cold sores reappear several times during the year. An attack usually begins with a tingling sensation. A painful blister appears and then collapses to form a weeping sore which dries to form a scab.

The antiviral agent aciclovir, if used at the tingle stage, can prevent the progress of the cold sore; either stopping the cold sore altogether or limiting the severity of the attack.

Other treatments available involve relief of pain and the application of soothing products which help the sore to dry up. Products containing iodine claim to affect a cold sore's progress if used quickly at the tingling stage. Sufferers should be advised to avoid physical contact with others and wash their hands often during an attack to avoid spreading the virus. If herpes spreads to the eye and the infection is untreated there may be permanent vision impairment.