Testing for Herpes Simplex Infections

Getting it DONE!
Tens of millions of people have been diagnosed with herpes infections
Genital Herpes Issues

- The Most Common Cause of Genital Ulceration is Herpes Simplex
- Increasing Incidence - 30% increase over the past decade
- Approximately 90% of Recurrent Genital Herpes is Caused by Herpes Simplex 2 Virus (Type 2)
Why Do We Need a New Diagnostic Testing Method?

- One in Four Adults are Infected with the Herpes Virus - 45 Million People
- Only 20% of Those Individuals Have Been Diagnosed
- Most Cases of Genital Herpes Do NOT Present with the “Typical Symptoms” of External Lesions (Blisters)
Why Do We Need a New Diagnostic Testing Method?

A major challenge posed by genital herpes is that virtually all infected (seropositive) individuals, regardless of history, have periods of active viral shedding. All are potentially capable of transmitting the infection to sexual partners; yet, most take no precautions because they have not been diagnosed, counseled, or managed with anti-viral therapy.
What is the problem?

You’d think by now that the method of diagnosing the disease was easy and straightforward... but often it is not
Why is this?

Most people already have type 1 HSV latently on the face.
Blood testing

So, blood tests showing a positive test for type 1 don’t necessarily tell you anything about genital infections.
The “Gold Standard” remains the Viral Culture

...unless PCR DNA testing is available
A positive viral culture gives the diagnosis.

Remember to ask that the virus be “typed”
Incidence of Genital HSV by Types

In America, about 75% of new cases of genital HSV are caused by type 2, 25% by type 1.
Incidence of Oral HSV by Types

In America, almost all cases of new oral HSV are type 1, and 80% or more of people develop oral HSV as children.
How to do Testing

Start with a viral culture of the suspected herpes lesion

If it is positive, then the diagnosis is made
How to do Testing

If the culture is negative, do “type specific serology” for HSV types 1 and 2. 

Alternative: POCkit test
If genital lesions are present and type 2 blood testing is positive, then the problem is probably type 2 genital HSV.
If genital lesions are present and ONLY type 1 blood testing is positive, then the problem MIGHT BE type 1 genital HSV.
Test Interpretation

Remember, though, that most people have positive type 1 antibody anyway

...so where did that antibody come from?
If all blood tests are negative, repeat them in about three months.
If either one turns positive, then that type is probably the cause of the herpes outbreak.
The New "POCkit Test" for type 2 herpes simplex antibody
Collect sample of blood into capillary tube
Positive Result

Negative Result
Summary Thoughts
Testing can be very confusing for many people. 

Use ONLY type specific blood testing.
Negative tests do **NOT** completely rule out the possibility of HSV infections, especially in the case of a viral culture.
Maintaining contact with a knowledgeable physician and utilizing Internet resources such as on-line pharmacies, Herpes.org and Herpeshelp.com can really help to provide information that can help people get tested appropriately and receive the right treatment.
Please contact the Webmaster at webmaster@herpes.org if you have any questions!