

# Parenting, Children and Genital Herpes

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## Reassurances

Parents commonly tell us about worries they have about passing on genital herpes to their children in the course of daily life (we are not referring here to pregnancy and childbirth – that’s another topic we’ll write about). Perhaps because there is so little information that addresses parents’ concerns, parents end up devising all sorts of ‘safety strategies’ that are completely unnecessary.

The key message is – loving parents (this category includes grumpy, tired, in-need-of-a-break parents) do not pass on genital herpes to their children through the ‘normal’ intimacies of family life. It’s important that fear of transmission doesn’t get in the way of loving touch and shared experiences.

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- Snuggling in bed together is ‘safe’ – the virus isn’t crawling on the sheets from one person to the next.
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- Sharing a bath or shower together isn’t a way the virus is passed on – the same is true for spa baths and swimming pools.
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- Washing clothes in the same washing machine, even when a person has a recurrence, will not pass on the virus.
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- A child brushing against an adult’s upper thighs or abdomen while the adult has a recurrence won’t pass on the virus.
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- If an adult uses the toilet or has touched the genital area and forgotten to wash their hands, this omission is not problematic in terms of herpes. The virus is fragile and dies when it leaves living cells.
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- Washing with ordinary soap and water is clean enough – there’s no need to use any special hand or toilet seat sanitisers.
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- I know children do all sorts of odd things that you can’t anticipate, but even if they put your worn knickers on their head they are not going to contract the virus – relax and laugh with them.
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I hope this information will reassure any of you who are parents (nieces, nephews, grandkids, stepkids etc) and help you to enjoy your children.