



Cold Sores

The cold sore virus is very common and is carried by up to 80% of the population. It is caused by a virus called 'herpes simplex' (HSV). Once you have been infected, the virus lies dormant in the nerves that supply feeling to the face and mouth. The virus can subsequently be reactivated by triggers, and it is this reactivation that causes cold sores on the lips. These triggers can vary between individuals, for example, where one person is more affected by a cold; another sufferer may be more susceptible to sunlight. Identifying the trigger is the first step to take towards managing cold sores.

Common trigger factors include:-

- Ultraviolet (UV) light from sunshine or sun bed exposure.
- Common cold, flu or feverish illness.
- Menstruation.
- Exposure to extreme temperatures or weather conditions.
- An injury to the mouth, surgical operation or dental treatment.

Are they infectious?

Cold sores are highly infectious and capable of spreading to other parts of the body. The virus is often spread through something an infected person used, like a toothbrush, towel or tube of lip balm. If particles of the HSV virus are transferred to an object and it is used by someone else, that person runs a strong risk of infection. However people are most likely to become infected by HSV through exposure to someone with a cold sore. The HSV virus is usually transmitted through direct contact such as kissing, or it can spread through sneezing, coughing, or even touching a cold sore.

Manipulation of the face or lips can make the condition worse and cause breakdown of the lesion and bleeding, spreading the virus to other areas of the skin which can cause significant problems. Infection of the eyes is a rare but significantly serious complication.

Can I have dental treatment when I have a cold sore?

In view of the above information Guisseley Dental Care has decided not to treat patients who have an active cold sore. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause but feel this measure protects both our staff and patients alike. If you have or need a dental appointment and develop a cold sore please contact the practice and a member of our team can advise you how to proceed.