



Herpes Simplex Virus

The main cause of ocular herpes is the **herpes simplex virus I (HSV I)**, the same virus that causes cold sores. However, it can also result from the sexually transmitted **herpes simplex II virus (HSV II)** that causes genital herpes.

Ocular herpes produces sores on the surface of the cornea and, in time, the inflammation can spread deeper into the cornea and eye.

There is no cure for ocular herpes, but it can often be controlled with the use of antiviral drugs or steroid eye drops or a combination of the two.

Herpes zoster (shingles) is a recurrence of herpes zoster (the chickenpox virus) in people who have already had the disease. After having chickenpox, this virus usually remains inactive within the nerves of the body. It can later travel down these nerves, infecting specific parts of the body, like the eye. Herpes zoster can cause blisters or lesions on the cornea, fever, and pain from nerve fibers. Corneal lesions usually heal by themselves, but antiviral treatment or steroid eye drops may be needed to reduce inflammation.

Shingles can occur in anyone exposed to the chickenpox virus, but there is an increased risk in:

- Older adults, especially over age 80
- People with a weakened immune system