

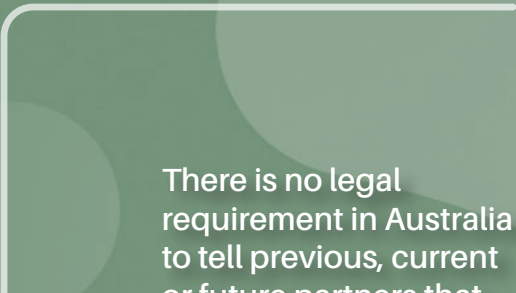
Talking about Herpes



SEXUAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING ACT

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about herpes, scan
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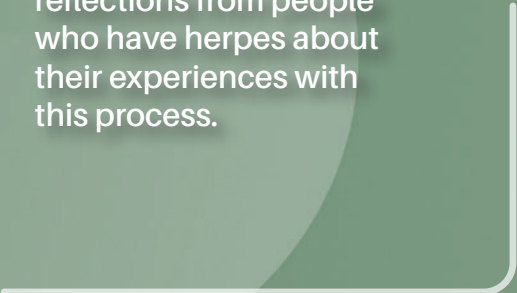




There is no legal requirement in Australia to tell previous, current or future partners that you have herpes.

Thinking about who to tell, and how to talk about herpes, can be a difficult and complicated process.

Here are some reflections from people who have herpes about their experiences with this process.



“The first time I told someone I had genital herpes in the early stages of a relationship, he said: ‘You want to know something... **I have too.**’ ... I couldn’t believe it... all that worry... **we had to laugh.**”

M.J

“When I found out, it felt like the end of the world, I thought I would never have sex again... When I eventually told friends about it, I found out that two of them had it ... I realised it was **so so common** and not the big deal I thought it was.”

V. P.

“My dating life hasn’t changed much. **Herpes has allowed me to be more vulnerable** with men who are deserving of my time, and **also set boundaries** for those who are only seeking to ‘smash and pass’.”

Kayla

“In my late twenties as a recently divorced male going about the dating scene... I ended up in front of all sorts of people and reading all sorts of leaflets - basically everything I could get my hands on that may offer me some relief... I did have to tell my next partner about my condition and because I knew the facts it was not a problem - we have been married now for 14 years and we have a child and a very close loving relationship — **Herpes is the least of my worries.**”

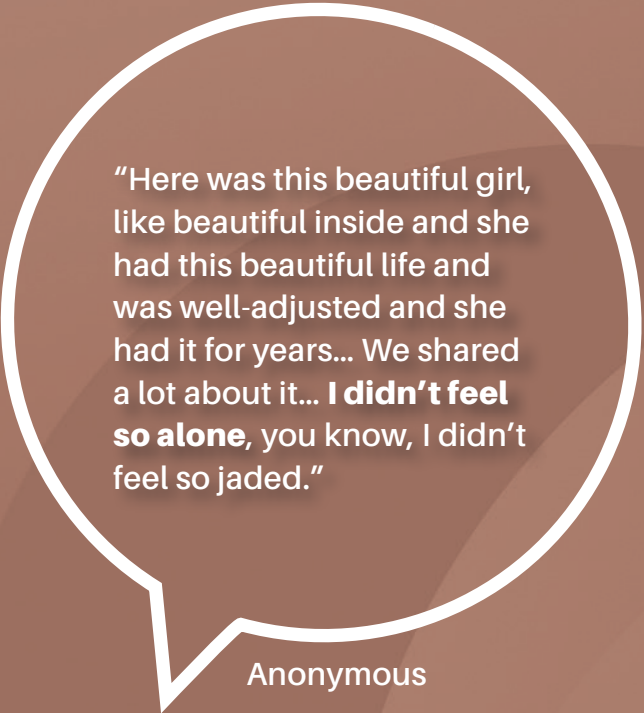
P. F.

“About a week into our budding relationship... we chatted about the health centre on campus, and with my eyes fixed firmly on the road, I told him about my experience getting treated for genital herpes. He asked me **without any trace of judgment** what [it] meant for my sex life ... It helped to not have to look at him and watch as he processed the new information. It was also easier for us to talk about herpes in the context of my general health, as opposed to our possible relationship.”

Ella

“[after my diagnosis] I didn’t see a lot of my friends, and a lot of my friends wondered... **I finally felt very much compelled to tell my best friend.** And he was the first male I ever told about it because it had come to the point where our friendship, he felt was going straight down the tubes.”

Thomas



“Here was this beautiful girl, like beautiful inside and she had this beautiful life and was well-adjusted and she had it for years... We shared a lot about it... **I didn't feel so alone**, you know, I didn't feel so jaded.”

Anonymous

“How others feel about my condition isn’t a reflection on me or my worth whatsoever, and I’m still grateful for the chance to be someone who can educate them about herpes. **Knowing that I’m one of billions** who share this experience also **makes me feel less alone**, and like I’m going to be okay. I’m determined to live my best life no matter what, and honestly... I am.”

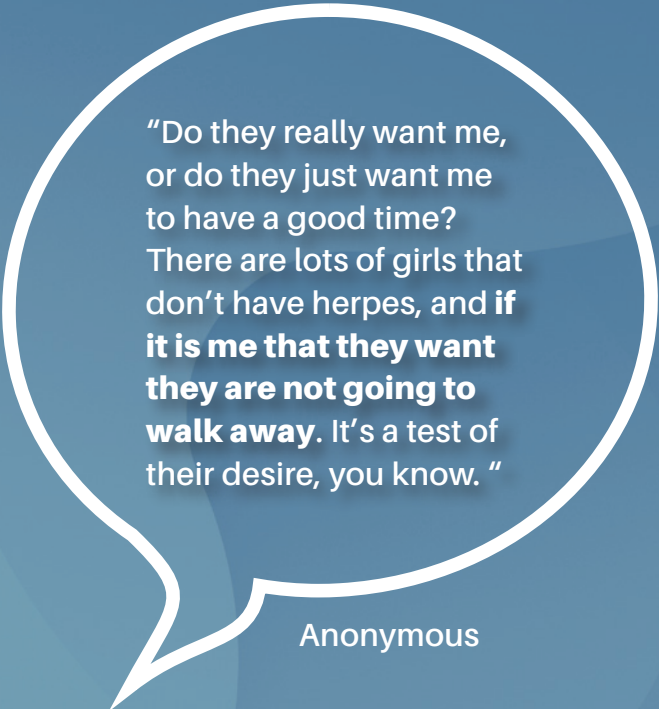
Lexi

“One day I went to meet him and he had this big cold sore on his face. It was **the perfect vehicle** to start the discussion... I told him.”

Anonymous

“Every time I tell someone that I have genital herpes, I run the risk of it being the only thing they remember about me. But **when I tell them on my terms**, with confidence and cleverness instead of shaking hands and shame, **I am immediately positioned to get a better response.**”

Ella



“Do they really want me,
or do they just want me
to have a good time?
There are lots of girls that
don’t have herpes, and **if
it is me that they want
they are not going to
walk away.** It’s a test of
their desire, you know. ”

Anonymous

“I don’t ever want anybody to feel how I felt ... From diagnosis to rejection, **I don’t want someone to feel like they have to face this alone ...** I will publicly share that I tested positive to HSV2. I’ll share that it can happen to anybody ... that it is from the same family as chicken pox, another virus that stays in your system forever, yet isn’t given the same stigma. I’ll share that it isn’t something that affects me physically, but it does affect the conversations I have, the thoughts I have and the way I feel.”

Annaleise

“For me, I think disclosing is an act of **respect**, an act of **love**, and an act of **care**.”

Ella

“When you are in a new relationship which you would like to continue, it may help to delay having sex for a while. This could be for a few weeks, or even up to 6 weeks or so. This allows time for intimacy, closeness, and trust to develop before you tell your partner that you have herpes. This can feel a bit safer for you, and also make it even more likely that they will be ok with it. People generally find that disclosure goes very well when they do this.”

Sexual
Counsellor

Quotes sourced from:

Ella Dawson

Why I Love Telling People I Have Herpes, Women's Health.

Messages from People with Herpes

The New Zealand Herpes Foundation.

Lexi Inks

I Have Herpes, And Here's How It Has Affected My Dating Life. Refinery29

Janice M. Swanson and W. Carole Chenitz

Regaining a Valued Self: The Process of Adaptation to Living With Genital Herpes. Qualitative Health Research

Eleanor Cummins

Why Do We Expect People to Disclose Having Genital Herpes? Slate

James Daniel Lee and Elizabeth A. Craft

Protecting one's self from a stigmatized disease... once one has it. Deviant Behaviour

Ashley Cobb

The Truth About Dating With Herpes, Women Tell All. Essence

Annaleise Easlea

My herpes diagnosis was soul-shattering. I'm finally ready to talk about it. Mamamia

Resources



SHFPACT Factsheet.
Find more information
about the Herpes
Simplex Virus (HSV).



New Zealand
Herpes Foundation.
*Messages From
People With Herpes.*



Ella Dawson.
*Why I Love Telling
People I Have Herpes
in Women's Health.*



Lexi Inks. *I Have Herpes,
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Affected My Dating Life
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