

Management of Genital Herpes

First episode

Treatment should be initiated based on clinical diagnosis and not delayed while awaiting laboratory confirmation.

Supportive measures :

- Saline bathing
- Simple analgesia
- Topical lidocaine 5% ointment. Recommend application 10-15 mins before micturition if urine is coming into contact with lesions.

Antivirals:

- Aciclovir 400 mg three times daily for 5 days or 200mg five times daily for five days, or
 - Valaciclovir 500 mg twice daily for 5 days
- In cases with multiple lesions causing significant pain and distress, review in 5 days. If symptoms not abating, or new lesions still appearing, or ongoing systemic symptoms, offer further 5 day course of antiviral.

Recurrent episodes – frequency <6 / year

Supportive measures as above. Recurrences are generally self-limiting and often do not require antiviral treatment.

Antivirals (if required):

- Aciclovir 800 mg three times daily for 2 days or 400 mg three times daily for 3–5 days, or
 - Valaciclovir 500 mg twice daily for 5 days
- Reduction in episode duration is greatest with early treatment initiation, i.e. within first 24 hours of onset. Therefore patients benefit from advance provision of antiviral drugs.

Recurrent episodes – frequency 6 or more / year

Consider suppressive therapy, particularly in patients with significant psychological morbidity.

Regimens:

- Aciclovir 400mg twice daily, or
 - Valaciclovir 500mg once daily
- In the event of breakthrough symptoms, increase aciclovir to 400mg three times daily or valaciclovir to 500mg twice daily until symptoms have subsided.

Recommend a treatment interruption every 6 to 12 months to reassess recurrence frequency based on time interval between **at least two recurrences**, as an initial rebound episode is common. If recurrences continue at an unacceptable rate, re-start suppressive treatment.

Aciclovir is an extremely safe drug, including in pregnancy, and does not require monitoring in previously well patients. Dose adjustment is only necessary in advanced renal disease. There is no limit to the length of time a patient can take aciclovir.