

An analysis of data from several studies looking at HSV-2 and condom use finds that safer sex is highly protective against the acquisition of genital herpes.

Researchers from the University of Washington and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention looked at data from six studies where subjects were evaluated periodically for HSV-2 (including at enrollment) and also self-reported on sexual activity and condom use.

The analysis was done using a “case-crossover” method where, instead of simply comparing rates of HSV-2 acquisition among different subjects where some used condoms while others did not, they looked only at data from individuals who acquired HSV-2 during the studies.

191 subjects became positive for HSV-2 during the course of the six studies, and with these subjects the researchers looked at both their condom use and sexual activity during “case” and “control” periods to determine the likelihood of HSV-2 acquisition with protected versus unprotected sex acts.

The odds of acquiring HSV-2 increased 3.6% with each unprotected sex act, but there was no increased HSV-2 risk when condoms were used, which the authors say “Suggests that condoms offer significant protection against HSV-2 transmission.”

Visit ASHA’s [Herpes Resource Center](#) for more on HSV prevention and management.

Reference

Stanaway J, Wald A, Martin E, Gottlieb S, and Margaret A. Case-crossover analysis of condom use and herpes simplex virus type 2 acquisition. *STD*, 2012. 39(5):388-393.