

CANADIANS LACK KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GENITAL HERPES



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CANADIANS LACK KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GENITAL HERPES

Toronto, ON – A new Ipsos-Reid survey conducted on behalf of GlaxoSmithKline finds Canadians are largely unaware of the prevalence of genital herpes and are not cognizant of the sexually transmitted disease.

Just one in ten (9%) Canadians correctly identifies that 20% of Canadians have genital herpes. Four in ten (41%) underestimate the percentage of Canadians with the disease and another quarter (25%) simply say they “don’t know.” Moreover, a mere 5% know that 80% of Canadians with genital herpes are unaware that they have the disease. Close to 8 in 10 (77%) underestimate the percentage of Canadians that are unaware that they have genital herpes.

Canadians were asked which, if any, of five sources—blood transfusions, swimming pools or bath water, sexual contact, toilet seats, and shaking hands—they think is a way that genital herpes can be transmitted. While nearly all (97%) Canadians correctly identified “sexual contact” as a means of transmission, just 38% correctly identified “sexual contact” as the *only* source.

Findings from the survey also reveal that eight in ten (82%) Canadians erroneously believe that “there is a simple test that doctors can do for people that allows them to accurately make the diagnosis of genital herpes” and that nearly half (46%) of Canadians mistakenly think “genital herpes can only be transmitted during sexual contact when a person has visible symptoms.” Finally, a sizeable minority of 19% wrongly believe that “there are treatments available for genital herpes that can make it go away entirely.”

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These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid/GlaxoSmithKline poll conducted from June 28th to June 30th, 2005. For the survey, a representative randomly selected sample of 1003 adult Canadians was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.

Canadians Underestimate The Proportion Of Canadians With Genital Herpes

Just one in ten (9%) Canadians correctly identifies that 20% of Canadians have genital herpes. While close to four in ten (38%) get close to the correct answer by guessing that between 11% and 30% of Canadians suffer from the disease, 4 in 10 (41%) underestimate the percentage and another quarter (25%) say they “don’t know.”

- The propensity to respond “don’t know” increases with age: 15% of Canadians 18-34 years of age say they don’t know what percentage of Canadians have genital herpes; 21% of Canadians 35-54 years of age respond this way; and 34% of Canadians 55 years of age or older say they don’t know.
- Canadians with a high school diploma or lower levels of education are more likely than those with at least some post secondary education to say they don’t know what percentage of Canadians have genital herpes (30% vs. 21%).

And, They Underestimate The Proportion That Are Unaware Of The Fact That They Have The STD

A mere 5% know that 80% of Canadians with genital herpes are unaware that they have genital herpes. Close to eight in ten (77%) underestimate the percentage of Canadians that are unaware of the fact that they have the disease, and three in ten (29%) dramatically underestimate it by suggesting that ten percent or fewer of Canadians are in this situation. Sixteen percent of Canadians couldn't offer a guess in answer to this question!

Just Four In Ten Correctly Identify “Sexual Contact” As The Only Way Of Transmitting Genital Herpes

Canadians were asked which, if any, of five sources—blood transfusions, swimming pools or bath water, sexual contact, toilet seats, and shaking hands—they think is a way that genital herpes can be transmitted. While nearly all (97%) Canadians correctly identified “sexual contact” as a means of transmission, just 38% correctly identified “sexual contact” as the *only* source.

Some Canadians mistakenly think that genital herpes can be transmitted “from blood transfusions” (36%), “from toilet seats” (27%), “from swimming pools or bathwater” (15%), and/or “from shaking hands” (7%).

- Middle-aged Canadians 35-54 years of age are more likely than younger or older adults to correctly identify “sexual contact” as the *only* source of transmission (45% vs. 32% and 35%, respectively).



- Women are more likely than men to correctly identify “sexual contact” as the *only* source of transmission (42% vs. 33%).
- University graduates are more likely than Canadians with lower levels of education to correctly identify “sexual contact” as the *only* source of transmission (47% vs. 33%).

Eight In Ten Canadians Mistaken In Thinking There Is A Simple Medical Test To Diagnose Genital Herpes

Canadians were asked whether the following statement is true or false: “There is a simple test that doctors can do for people that allows them to accurately make the diagnosis of genital herpes.” Just 11% of Canadians correctly identified the statement as false, while eight in ten (82%) erroneously believe it to be true.

Nearly Half Of Canadians Erroneously Believe The STD Can Only Be Transmitted When There Are Visible Symptoms

Half (50%) of Canadians correctly identified the following statement as false: “Genital herpes can only be transmitted during sexual contact, when a person has visible symptoms.” However, nearly half (46%) mistakenly think it’s true.

- Canadians 35 years of age or older are more likely than younger adults to mistakenly think that “genital herpes can only be transmitted during sexual contact, when a person has visible symptoms” (51% vs. 36%).



A Sizeable Minority Wrongly Thinks Treatments Are Available To Make Genital Herpes Disappear Entirely

Three-quarters (76%) of Canadians correctly identify the following statement as false: "There are treatments available for genital herpes that can make it go away entirely." However, a sizeable minority of 19% wrongly believe it to be true.

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