



Data Points

CWHS

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

Genital herpes (HSV-2) is one of the most prevalent sexually transmitted diseases in the United States. The third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANESIII) found a prevalence of almost 22% for HSV-2 among individuals over 12 years old.¹ The majority of those infected are unaware of their infections, and asymptomatic individuals are able to shed virus and transmit infection to their partners. The California Women's Health Survey asked 2,479 women ages 18 to 44 two questions about genital herpes. These are as follows: "True or False: Most genital herpes is spread from a sexual partner when he or she is having a genital herpes outbreak (such as a sore or blister)." and "True or False: Most people infected with genital herpes know they have it."

- Overall, 80% of women believed incorrectly that most HSV-2 transmission occurs during an outbreak.
- An additional 47% of women believed incorrectly that most people are aware of their herpes status.

Older women were more likely to have

misinformation about genital herpes.

- Of women ages 35 to 44, 87% believed incorrectly that most HSV-2 transmission occurs during an outbreak, compared to 81% of 25 to 34 year olds and 73% of 18 to 24 year olds.
- Of women ages 35 to 44, about 52% mistakenly believed that most people infected with herpes know it. This question was also answered incorrectly by 46% of 25 to 34 year olds and 36% of 18 to 24 year olds.

Women participating in the survey were asked if they could remember ever having been diagnosed with genital herpes.

- Of women surveyed, 4.3% reported having had a herpes diagnosis.

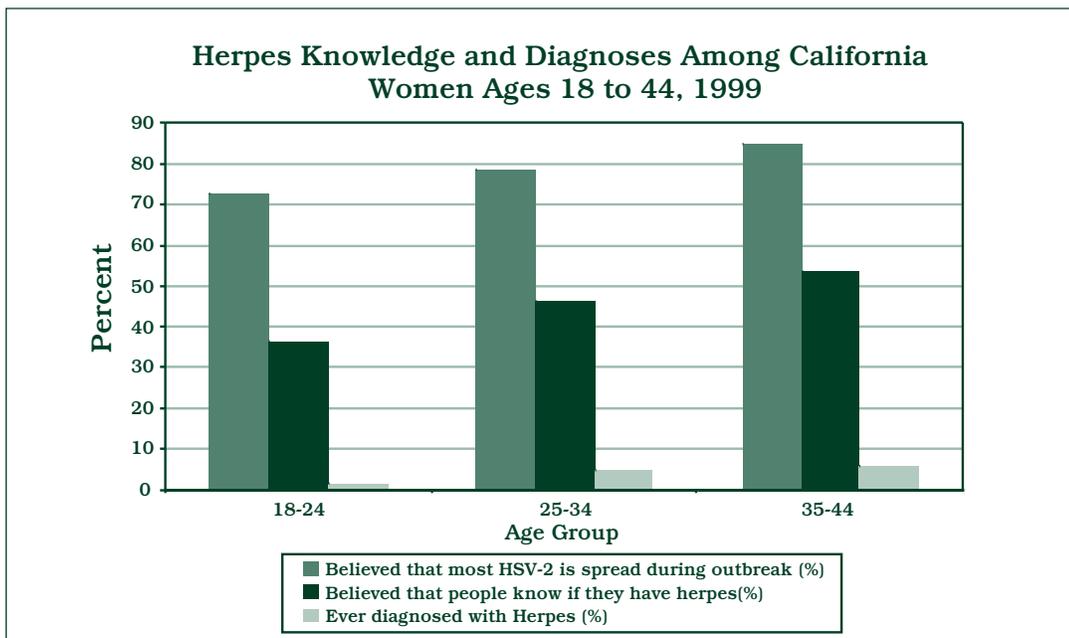
Age of first intercourse was also related to herpes diagnosis. The mean age of first intercourse among those reporting a diagnosis was 16 years compared to 18 years among those who did not report a herpes diagnosis.

GENITAL HERPES KNOWLEDGE AND DIAGNOSIS AMONG CALIFORNIA WOMEN, 1999

Sexually Transmitted Disease Control Branch, California Department of Health Services

Public Health Message:
Women surveyed were poorly informed about asymptomatic herpes and asymptomatic herpes transmission.

¹ Fleming, D.T., et al., Herpes simplex virus type 2 in the United States, 1976 to 1994. N Engl J Med, 199. 337(16):p. 1105-1



Issue 3, Summer 2002, Num. 18