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Herpes Knowledge Scale

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The Herpes Knowledge Scale (HKS) assesses general knowledge about genital herpes. Subject areas include cause, symptoms, treatment, contagion, recurrences, prevalence, complications, myths, and the relationship between oral and genital herpes. People who have high knowledge about these areas can be discriminated from those who have low knowledge.

Description

This scale is a 54-item true-false test with response options labeled True, False, and Don’t Know. The items were selected from an initial pool of 64 rationally field-derived statements about herpes. They were judged for readability by five undergraduate students and for their relevance and importance for inclusion in the scale by a panel of five expert judges. The judges agreed on 57 of the original items for inclusion. The scale was administered to 150 undergraduate students in introductory psychology courses, and an item analysis was conducted to identify the statements that could best discriminate high and low scorers. Fifty-four items had statistically significant item-total correlations (p < .0007). These items were arranged in random order, and the scale was tested for reliability. This scale was designed to measure college students’ knowledge about herpes, but it could be used for other populations.

Response Mode and Timing

Respondents circle or blacken one response option for each item on a separately labeled answer sheet. Most respondents complete the scale within 15 minutes.

Scoring

The response to each item is scored as correct or incorrect. Don’t know is scored as an incorrect response. Items 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 40, 41, 46, 48, and 49 are true. Items 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 30, 37, 38, 39, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 50, 51, 52, 53, and 54 are false. The total score is obtained by summing the number of correct responses, dividing this by 54, and multiplying this fraction by 100 so that scores are expressed as percentage correct (0–100%).

Reliability

To measure internal consistency (split-half reliability), 148 undergraduate students in psychology and health education classes completed the scale. Reliability was high (Cronbach’s alpha = .88; Bruce & McLaughlin, 1986; Bruce & Bullins, 1989).

Validity

Content and face validity were evaluated by a panel of five expert judges: a physician, a registered nurse, two health educators, and a graduate student with herpes. The judges assessed the relevance and importance of each item, as well as the comprehensiveness of the entire scale (Bruce & McLaughlin, 1986).

References

1. The length and severity of genital herpes outbreaks vary from person to person.
2. Genital herpes is caused by a virus.
3. Genital herpes was discovered five years ago.
4. Genital herpes recurrences can be triggered by menstruation (in females) or sexual intercourse.
5. Every person who has a primary (first) outbreak of genital herpes will have recurrence within the next year.
6. Genital herpes makes males infertile (sterile).
7. Between recurrences, the genital herpes virus lies dormant (inactive) in the nerve cells.
8. Herpes Type 1 cannot occur on the genitals.
9. A person having recurrences of genital herpes often experiences prodromal (early warning) sensations.
10. Years may pass between genital herpes recurrences.
11. Every sore on the genitals is herpes.
12. Once a genital herpes sore has healed, the person will never develop another herpes sore.
13. A person who gets cold sores on the mouth is immune to genital herpes.
14. Genital herpes usually looks like blisters on the genitals.
15. Prodromal (early warning) sensations of genital herpes recurrences include tingling or itching in the area where the genital herpes sores usually appear.
16. If a person has sexual intercourse with someone who has genital herpes, s/he will definitely get genital herpes too.
17. Several hundred people are expected to catch genital herpes from toilet seats this year.
18. A woman who has genital herpes will become sterile because of the herpes infection.
19. People who wear contact lenses and have oral (mouth) herpes should avoid putting the lenses in their mouths because the herpes infection could spread to their eyes.
20. A person with genital herpes is instructed to keep the sore area clean and dry.
21. Genital herpes leads to death.
22. There is a cure for genital herpes at present.
23. Genital herpes recurrences do not typically become less frequent over time.
24. A person who has genital herpes often has more psychological complications than physical complications.
25. When a person has an active outbreak of genital herpes, it is advisable not to have sexual intercourse.
26. People who have genital herpes can sometimes predict when they will have a recurrence.
27. A woman who has genital herpes should have a Pap smear at least once a year.
28. Genital herpes can be contagious even if the herpes sore has a scab on it.
29. First episodes of genital herpes infection are usually more severe than the recurrences.
30. A person who has genital herpes is immune to oral (mouth) herpes.
31. Between recurrences, the genital herpes virus lies dormant (inactive) near the spinal cord.
32. Stress can often trigger a genital herpes recurrence.
33. Herpes can be fatal to a newborn if s/he contracts the infection.
34. Genital herpes can often be detected by the use of a Pap smear.
35. After a person is exposed to genital herpes, s/he will often show symptoms in 2–20 days.
36. Anxiety can trigger a genital herpes recurrence.
37. Condoms offer 100% protection from catching genital herpes.
38. A genital herpes infection usually leads to syphilis.
39. A woman who had genital herpes must have a Caesarean section if she has a baby.
40. Most people have been exposed to oral herpes at one time or another.
41. A woman with genital herpes can deliver a baby through her vagina if she doesn’t have an active herpes infection at the time of delivery.
42. If both parents have genital herpes, their children will be born with herpes.
43. A woman who has genital herpes can never have a baby.
44. Genital herpes is not contagious.
45. L-lysine is a cure for genital herpes.
46. Genital herpes may be associated with cancer of the cervix.
47. Contraceptive foam has been proven to kill genital herpes in humans.
48. In a primary (first) case of genital herpes, the person may feel like s/he has the flu.
49. Oral herpes is contagious.
50. The best way to treat genital herpes sores is to keep them moist.
51. Acyclovir (also called Zovirax or Valtrex), an anti-viral drug, can cure genital herpes.
52. A person with genital herpes is not contagious during the prodromal (early warning) stage.
53. Genital herpes is not prevalent (common) on college campuses.
54. Oral herpes cannot be transferred to the genitals during oral-genital sex.