

Rate of herpes infections declining

A new study says the rate of genital herpes infections in the United States is declining.

The Centers for Disease Control says 17 percent of Americans had HSV-2 between 1999 and 2004, down from 21 percent between 1988 and 1994, WebMD reported.

The CDC study -- published in the current issue of The Journal of the American Medical Association -- is based on actual blood samples. WebMD said the report supports recent studies documenting a reduction in high-risk sex among teens.

The study also found a reduction in the rate of infection with HSV-1, the virus that causes cold sores. HSV-1, fell from 62 percent between 1988 and 1994, to 57.7 between 1999 and 2004.

The researchers warn, however, that the herpes virus that causes cold sores may one day become an important cause of genital herpes. The study says an increase in teen oral sex, which is attributed to helping reduce the rate of HSV-2, may be increasing genital infections with HSV-1.

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