

Virus that causes cold sores linked to Alzheimer's

By Mary Brophy Marcus
USA TODAY

Cold sores may be linked to Alzheimer's disease, new research suggests.

Scientists from the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, Brown University and House Ear Institute in Los Angeles have developed a new lab technique that helps them observe how herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV1) infections grow inside cells. It's a common virus that infects mucous membranes and causes cold sores.

Using the new method, the scientists were able to watch the virus burst out of the cells of a mucous membrane and enter nerve cells, says researcher Shi-Bin Cheng of the Alpert Medical School at Brown University. In theory, the virus then could travel to the brain and affect dementia plaques.

"Clinicians have seen a link between HSV1 infection and Alzheimer's disease in patients, so we wanted to investigate what might be going on in the body that would account for this," he says. "What we were able to see in the lab strongly suggests a causal link between HSV1 and Alzheimer's."

Alzheimer's expert Murali Doraiswamy of Duke Medicine says HSV1 as a cause of Alzheimer's "was a fringe theory for many years. In recent years the link has slowly gained more attention." It's probably not a cause but one co-factor, he says.

Experts advise treating a cold sore quickly to minimize the time the virus is active.

Beauty Alert

Get the Lead Out

How many times a day do you

apply your favorite lipstick? According to a study released by the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, you may be giving yourself more than pouty lips each time you paint your kisser. Out of 33 lipsticks tested, including such big names as L'Oréal, Revlon, Dior, and MAC, 61 percent contained detectable levels of lead and one-third exceeded the FDA's recommended limit for ingestible lead in candy. We were also disappointed to find that natural doesn't necessarily mean lead-free. Burt's Bees and Peacekeeper's lipsticks both tested positive for lead. The culprits? Colorants used in red lipstick, such as FD&C color additives and by-products from raw materials such as zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, or petroleum-based ingredients. So you might want to avoid classic fire-engine reds and opt for "lighter, less saturated hues, which may be less likely to contain lead from color additives," says the Campaign's Marisa Walker. And here are some natural brands that have eliminated the dangerous duo of FD&C colorants and petroleum: Jane Iredale, Hemp Organics by Colorganics, Ecco Bella, and Dr. Hauschka. —NS

