Herpes is rampant but there’s no vaccine in sight. Is it next on the gene editing cure list?

The fact is, almost everyone has herpes. Just so we’re defining our terms, genital herpes refers to the incredibly common STI caused by either type one or type two of the herpes simplex virus, or HSV.

Because of both its physical and psychological tolls, scientists have spent decades trying to create a vaccine for herpes. But so far, the most successful medical advancements have been in antiviral medications.

Enter: gene editing. This powerful procedure works by introducing a human-made enzyme that “snips” genes at crucial points, and can then modify them or insert different segments in their stead. By potentially eliminating inherited diseases embedded in a person’s genetic makeup, scientists hope the procedure could one day help people who’ve been infected with otherwise incurable viruses like herpes and HIV.

In virologist Keith Jerome’s research, molecular scissors enter a cell and look for a specific sequence of DNA that is only found in the herpes virus. Once they find the herpes-specific DNA, the scissors cut it in half. This disrupts the virus so that “it’s no longer able to reactivate, cause lesions, transmit to a new host, any of those problems,” he says.

“If we can perfect it in the future studies, this would be a way to completely inactivate all the virus in a person,” he says.

Read full, original post: Can We Gene-Edit Herpes Away?