

Syphilis

Syphilis is a common sexually transmitted disease (STD) in the United States. Anyone who is sexually active, no matter their gender or sexual orientation, can contract Syphilis. It is a bacterial infection and is divided into four different stages (primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary) each one having different signs and symptoms.

Frequent Signs & Symptoms

There are often NO signs or symptoms.

Symptoms may include:

Primary (about 3 weeks after exposure)

- Small sore(s) (Chancre) that appears where the bacteria enters the body. Usually around genitals, anus, or mouth. Usually painless so can go unnoticed.

Secondary (2-8 weeks after sore(s) appears)

- Non itchy rash that can include palms and soles of feet, swollen lymph nodes, and fever. May last a few weeks or come and go for up to a year.

Latent (hidden stage)

- No signs or symptoms

Tertiary (late syphilis, rare, years after other stages)

- Damage to brain, heart, liver, and other organs.

Causes

Syphilis is caused by the bacteria *Treponema Pallidum*. Syphilis is passed from one person to another during sexual intercourse. You can become infected by having vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse with a partner who has Syphilis. Infection can occur even if your partner does not have symptoms.

Prevention

The only way to avoid contracting Syphilis is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse (abstinence).

If you are sexually active, ways to reduce your risk include:

- Maintaining a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and has proof of negative test results.
- Using condoms the right way EVERY time you have sex. This includes condoms with oral intercourse.

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Diagnosis

Your health care provider will need to do a physical exam and a blood test will need to be done to confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment

Your health care provider will need to prescribe an antibiotic to treat Syphilis. The most common treatment is a one-time injection of Penicillin. Depending on the stage of syphilis, more doses may be required. Notify your health care provider of any medication allergies you may have. Follow up testing will need to be done to confirm treatment was successful. All sex partners must be treated. The local health department will assist your health care provider in determining the stage of syphilis and identifying all sexual contacts. Tertiary (late) syphilis requires hospitalization.

Activity

You must refrain from sexual activity until you have confirmed the infection was successfully treated and your sex partner(s) have been treated and confirmed successful treatment.

Use condoms with all intercourse.

You should have routine testing at least once a year if you are sexually active.

Complications

Syphilis sores can increase the risk of contracting HIV. Serious medical conditions and even death can occur if it goes untreated and syphilis progresses to tertiary stage.

If symptoms worsen or do not improve, return to the clinic.

If you have worsening of symptoms when the Health and Wellness Center is unavailable, please follow up with the local ER or Urgent Care.

Additional Information: _____
