

Syphilis

Most people who have syphilis don't know it; often this STD has no symptoms.

- Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that anyone can get.
- The first symptom is typically a painless, round, and firm red sore that can appear anywhere you've had sex.
- Syphilis happens in stages; just because symptoms may go away, you will still have syphilis until treated.
- You can pass syphilis to others without knowing it.
- Syphilis is easy to treat and cure.

If you do not treat syphilis, it can lead to serious health problems.

The number of reported cases of syphilis today are higher than they have been for 24 years.

What are the symptoms of syphilis?

Syphilis has four stages: primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary.

Primary:

- You may have a painless sore on the penis, vagina, mouth, anus, or rectum. This sore is known as a chancre, and will most likely be found where you had sex (i.e. if you had oral sex, the chancre may be found in the mouth)
- This sore will last 3-6 weeks and heals on its own. If you don't get treatment, it will progress to the next stage.

Secondary:

- You may have a rash on your hands and feet or other parts of your body. Other symptoms may include: fever, sore throat, muscle aches, hair loss, and feeling tired. If not treated, the disease will progress to the next stage.

Latent:

- You have no symptoms in this stage, but it can still be detected in blood tests.
- Syphilis can remain hidden for many years in the latent stage.

Tertiary:

- This stage is very serious. Symptoms may include: difficulty moving your arms and legs, paralysis, numbness, blindness, heart disease, and even death.

Neurosyphilis

- Neurosyphilis can happen at any time during syphilis. Some symptoms include: abnormal walking or inability to walk, confusion, headaches, seizures, stiff neck, or vision problems

How can I lower my risk for syphilis?

- The surest way is to not have sex.
- Have sex with someone who is not infected and who has sex with only you.
- Condoms can reduce your risk of getting syphilis if used correctly (see other side for instructions) every single time you have sex.
- Washing the genitals, urinating, or douching after sex will not prevent any STD.

How is syphilis treated?

- Syphilis can be treated with antibiotics.

What happens if I don't get treated?

- Syphilis stays in your body if it is not treated. It can damage your heart, brain, eyes, and other organs. This damage may not show up for many years and could kill you.
- If you have syphilis, you have a higher chance of getting HIV. If you have syphilis and HIV, you can spread both diseases more easily.
- If you become pregnant and have syphilis, you can pass this on to your baby during pregnancy. Syphilis is extremely serious for babies, causing miscarriages, stillbirth, or deformities. Make sure you get tested for syphilis at the first prenatal visit, during the third trimester, and at delivery.