



What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) affecting people of all sexes that can cause serious health problems without treatment. Infection develops in stages. Each stage can have different signs and symptoms.

How is syphilis spread?

You can get syphilis by direct contact with a syphilis sore during vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

Syphilis can spread from a mother with syphilis to her unborn baby. You cannot get syphilis through casual contact with objects, such as:

toilet seats, doorknobs, swimming pools, hot tubs, bathtubs, sharing clothing, or eating utensils

How can I reduce my risk of getting Syphilis?

The only way to completely avoid STDs is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Condoms prevent the spread of syphilis by preventing contact with a sore. Sometimes sores occur in areas not covered by a condom. Contact with these sores can still transmit syphilis.

Am I at risk for syphilis?

Anyone who is sexually active can get syphilis. You are at risk if you:

- Have unprotected sex with anyone of unknown status
- Are a man who has sex with men
- Are living with HIV
- Have had sex with someone who's tested positive for syphilis
- Tested positive for another sexually transmitted infection



For more information and service locations

What are signs and symptoms of Syphilis?

There are four stages of syphilis (primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary). Each stage has different signs and symptoms.

Primary Stage

During the first (primary) stage of syphilis, you may notice a single sore or multiple sores. The sore is the location where syphilis entered your body. Sores usually occur in, on, or around the:

- penis, vagina, anus, rectum, and lips or in the mouth.
- Sores are usually (but not always) firm, round, and painless.



Secondary Stage

During the secondary stage, you may have skin rashes and/or sores in your mouth, vagina, or anus. This stage usually starts with a rash on one or more areas of your body. The rash can be on the palms of your hands and/or the bottoms of your feet and look rough, red, and reddish-brown.



Latent Stage

The latent stage of syphilis is a period when there are no visible signs or symptoms. Without treatment, you can continue to have syphilis in your body for years.

Tertiary Stage

When left untreated, people may develop complications known as tertiary syphilis. Syphilis isn't contagious at this point, but the infection damages the internal organs, including the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints. This damage can result in death.

