



Syphilis

What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by a bacterium called *Treponema Pallidum*.

The Basics

- Anyone can get syphilis. Many people who have syphilis don't know it. You can have syphilis even if you do not have any symptoms.
 - You can pass syphilis to others without knowing it.
 - Washing the genitals, urinating or douching after sex will not prevent syphilis.
- Syphilis is treatable with antibiotics. If you do not treat syphilis, it can lead to serious health problems.
 - Syphilis is tested through a simple blood test.

What are the Symptoms

Syphilis has been called the “great imitator” because of the wide range of possible symptoms. These symptoms may be confused with other conditions or diseases and can be overlooked.

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

Primary Stage Symptoms:

During the primary stage of syphilis, you may have one or more painless sores (known as a chancre) on the genitals or in the mouth, anus, or rectum. The sore is likely to appear wherever you had sex (and where the bacterium entered the body). The sore lasts 3 to 6 weeks and it heals on its own. If you do not

get treatment, the disease will progress to the next stage.

Secondary Stage Symptoms:

During the second stage of syphilis, you might have a rash on your hands or feet or on other parts of your body. Syphilis rashes are often red or brown and usually do not itch. Secondary syphilis occurs 2 weeks to 6 months after contact.

Other symptoms may include fever, sore throat, muscle aches, headaches, hair loss, and feeling tired (fatigue).

These symptoms may go away on their own. If you do not get treatment, the disease will progress to the next stage.

Latent Stage Symptoms:

In the latent stage of syphilis, you have no symptoms, but the disease can be detected by a blood test from your doctor. Syphilis can remain hidden for many years in the latent stage.

Tertiary Stage Symptoms:

Tertiary stage syphilis is very serious. It can begin after you've had untreated syphilis for a while, possibly many years – even if you never noticed symptoms.

Symptoms of tertiary syphilis may include difficulty moving your arms and legs, paralysis, numbness, blindness, and heart disease.

How is Syphilis Transmitted?

Syphilis can be transmitted through oral, genital or anal sex with someone with an active infection. You can get syphilis when your mouth, genitals, or another part of your body touches a syphilis sore on a person who has the infection.

If you are pregnant, you can pass syphilis on to your baby, even if you do not know you are infected.

Syphilis is infectious, or able to be passed from one person to another in the first year to two years after infection. After two years, it goes into a dormant or noninfectious state and is no longer able to be transmitted but can cause serious damage to the body tissues and organs.

Condoms can reduce your risk of getting syphilis if used the right way every single time you have sex. However, a condom only protects the area it covers; areas the condom does not cover can become infected.

How is Syphilis Diagnosed?

Syphilis is diagnosed through a blood test but can be detected through a swab taken from the sore (or chancre) itself.

How is Syphilis Treated?

Syphilis is treated with an antibiotic (penicillin). If you have syphilis for less than a year, one shot (dose) of penicillin will cure an individual. More doses are needed to treat someone who has had syphilis for longer than a year.

Your doctor will get you to repeat the blood test at 1,3,6, and 12 months after treatment to make sure it worked.

It is important to notify any sexual partners you may have had so that they are able to get testing and treatment,

Sexual Health Questions? We Have Answers!

Location:

47 St. Clare Avenue, St. John's, NL, A1C 2J9

Hours:

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Thursday: 12pm - 7pm

Friday: 9am - 4:30pm

Phone:

579-1009

Toll Free: 1-877-NO MYTHS

(1-877-666-9847)

Website:

www.plannedparenthoodnlshc.com

Email:

pp.nlshc@gmail.com

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