

SYPHILIS

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease caused by a type of bacteria called T. Pallidum. It can spread from person to person by physical contact during vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

What are the symptoms of syphilis?

Usually, symptoms show up 1-12 weeks after being exposed to syphilis.

Possible early symptoms: (1-12 weeks after becoming infected).

- Skin sore called a chancre (shank-er). There may be more than one. They are usually not painful. They may be on the penis, scrotum, vaginal lips, anus, or mouth. Infected women may not be aware of any symptoms because sores may be inside the vagina. **Even without treatment these sores will go away after several weeks, but you will still be infected.**
- Lymph glands near the sore may be swollen, and also are not painful.

Possible later symptoms: (4-12 weeks after becoming infected)

- Flu-like illness with sore throat, headache, and fever.
- Skin rash all over the body, in the mouth, on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet (not itchy).
- Warty-like growths may appear in the mouth or on the genitals.
- Patchy hair loss may be noticed.
- Nervous system symptoms: neck stiffness, nausea, vomiting, seizures, hearing loss and loss of speech. **Even without treatment these symptoms will go away after several weeks, but you are still infected.**

How would I know if I have syphilis?

- If you have a sore on your genitals, have an STD check. There are special tests available at City Clinic to diagnose syphilis from sores.
- A blood test for syphilis can be done.
- You could have syphilis and not know it.
 - Anytime you have tests for STDs be sure and ask for a syphilis blood test also.

Is syphilis dangerous?

Yes!! If not treated, syphilis can cause brain damage, heart disease and other long-term health problems. A pregnant woman can pass syphilis to her baby which could cause permanent damage.

How is syphilis treated?

- Penicillin shots cure syphilis. Other medicine can be used if you are allergic to penicillin.
- We sometimes find a positive test for syphilis in persons who are no longer sexual. They could have been infected many years ago. We recommend treatment for them because some people with long term, untreated syphilis can develop brain, heart, and nervous system damage. At this late stage of syphilis a person is not contagious to sex partners.

What can I do if I have syphilis?

- Your sex partner(s) must be examined and treated. If not treated, they can give the infection back to you, or infect others.
- Your syphilis blood test may stay positive (not normal) even after treatment. We will give you a card that shows proper treatment was given to cure your syphilis once your treatment is completed. You are not longer contagious once treatment is completed.
- You will need a repeat blood test one week after treatment, and then regularly during the first year of your diagnosis and treatment.

If you get infected with syphilis and do not know the HIV status of the sexual partner who infected you, you should be concerned about your increased risk of HIV. Talk to your clinician. All STDs are spread by having unsafe sex. HIV is also an STD. Protect yourself – use condoms (male or female).

How do I avoid getting syphilis?

- Plan ahead! Protect yourself!
- If you're thinking of having sex with a new partner:
 - Talk about STDs
 - Talk about your wish to have protected, safer sex (male or female condoms)
 - Suggest an STD check-up for both of you before having sex.

What can I expect when I am diagnosed with syphilis?

A Department of Public Health Disease Control Investigator may contact you. They will work closely with your doctor. They will help you better understand your infection and provide you with information needed to protect your future health.

Gay Men's Health:

<http://www.healthypenis2003.org/>

<http://inspot.org/>

<http://www.gmhc.org/>

STD Info:

<http://www.noah-health.org/>

<http://www.ashastd.org/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/>

WARNING: HIV is also an STD! All STDs are spread by having unsafe sex. When you get infected with an STD, you could also be getting HIV. Protect yourself – use condoms (male or female)!



For a STD check-up or treatment,
see your doctor, local clinic, or come to:

City Clinic
356 Seventh Street
(between Folsom and Harrison)
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415)487-5500

<http://www.dph.sf.ca.us/sfcityclinic/>