

Syphilis

What is syphilis?

Syphilis is an STI (infection you can get from sex). You can get syphilis by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with someone who has it.

How would I know if I have syphilis?

You may have syphilis but not have any signs of it. Getting tested is the only way to know if you have syphilis.

Syphilis affects your body in stages:

- **Early or primary.** You may notice 1 or more sores, called chancres, around your mouth, penis, vagina, or anus (butt). The sore doesn't hurt and it will go away on its own. You still have syphilis and need medicine even though the sore goes away.
- **Secondary.** You may get a rash on your body, often on the palms of your hands or soles of your feet. The rash can go away on its own. You still have syphilis and need medicine even if the rash goes away.

You may also:

- have a fever
 - feel very tired
 - have a sore throat
 - notice patchy hair loss
 - feel muscle aches
 - have swollen glands
- **Latent.** You may stay in this stage for years. In this stage, syphilis is still in your body but there are no signs of it.
 - **Late.** Syphilis is very serious at this stage. If a person has late stage syphilis, they can have damage to their heart, brain, nerves, eyes, liver, bones and joints. It can even lead to death.
 - **Get tested and treated for syphilis early. The sooner you find out you have it, the better.**



What is the treatment for syphilis?

- You can get a shot or pills to treat syphilis.
- Don't have sex while you're taking the medicine. You can risk passing on the infection to someone else.

What if I'm pregnant?

If you have syphilis and are pregnant, it can pass on to your baby.

There are chances of:

- having your baby too early
- a still birth (a baby that dies before delivery)
- giving birth to a baby that has syphilis but shows no signs. This can lead to serious problems like deafness, eye vision problems, seizures and death.

Get tested for syphilis during and after your pregnancy. Your doctor may be able to start treatment right away.

Practice safe sex.

Don't have sex while getting treatment.

- You risk passing on the infection to someone else. Your doctor will let you know when you can have sex again.

Use condoms.

- Condoms may or may not protect you from syphilis. This is because the condoms may not cover the sores. If the condom does not cover the sores, then you may not be fully protected from syphilis or any other STI.

If you have questions, talk to your CHN doctor or health educator!