Stages of syphilis

Syphilis has different stages where different symptoms are common. There may also be times when you have no symptoms at all – but the infection is there until you get treated. Although syphilis symptoms are not the same for everyone, there are some things you may notice.

Primary Stage

You may notice one or more sores that pop up on your mouth, lips, and/or genitals. The sores are usually firm, round, and painless. Sometimes they are open and wet. There is often only one sore, but you may have more.

Syphilis sores are SUPER contagious and easily pass the infection on to other people during sex. But it's easy to mistake a sore for an ingrown hair, pimple, or small bump.

Sores usually last 3 to 6 weeks and go away on their own – with or without treatment. Even after a sore goes away, you must still receive medication to cure syphilis and stop the infection from moving to the next stage.

Secondary Stage

During the secondary stage, you may have rashes on your body. The rash is sometimes hard to see, and it usually doesn't itch. You may have mild flu-like symptoms, like feeling tired, sore throat, headache, swollen glands, muscle aches, and slight fever. You can also have sores in your mouth, vagina, or anus. You may experience hair and/or weight loss.

The symptoms from this stage will go away with or without treatment. Without the right treatment, your infection will move to the dangerous later stages of syphilis. That is why STI testing is so important.

Late Stage

In between the secondary stage and late stage, there may be times when there are no visible signs or symptoms of syphilis for months or even years- but you still need treatment to get rid of it.

People who have syphilis for a long time face serious health problems, including tumors, blindness, and paralysis. It can also damage your blood vessels, nerves, brain, and other organs in a way they can't be healed. It can even kill you.

Sources:
What is syphilis?: Syphilis infection. Planned Parenthood. (n.d.). Retrieved January 5, 2023, from https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/STIs-hiv-safer-sex/syphilis

SYPHILIS

Anyone can get syphilis, a common infection that is spread through sex.

What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a common infection that is spread through sex. It can be easily cured with antibiotic medicine, but it can cause serious damage if you don't get treated early.

That's why testing is important – the sooner you know you have syphilis, the faster you can get rid of it.

How does syphilis spread?

Syphilis is an STI that spreads skin-to-skin during oral, anal, and vaginal sex. Often syphilis causes one or more sores on your genitals, lips, and mouth. The sores are usually painless, but they spread the infection to other people. A lot of people with syphilis don't notice the sores and feel totally fine.

A lot of people don't notice syphilis sores or mistake them for pimples or normal bumps. Early on most people with syphilis feel healthy and totally fine.

Pregnancy and syphilis

Pregnant people can pass syphilis to their unborn babies during pregnancy and childbirth. Untreated syphilis during pregnancy can cause serious life-long health concerns for your baby.

If you are pregnant, reach out to your provider about getting tested for syphilis.

Everyday contact doesn't spread syphilis

You will NOT get syphilis through regular contact with the following:

- Sitting on toilet seats
- Swimming in public pools, or
- Sharing food or drinks

Are you at risk of getting syphilis?

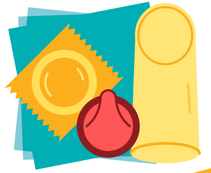
Anyone who has vaginal, anal, and/or oral sex can get syphilis.

Symptoms of syphilis

Syphilis symptoms are often so mild that most people don't notice them. Sometimes people even confuse them with pimples or rashes. Overtime, though, if you don't treat syphilis, it can lead to permanent health problems. That's why STI testing is so important if you have sex, no matter how healthy you feel.

How can I protect myself from syphilis?

You can prevent syphilis by using condoms and/or dental dams every time you have sex – even if you and your partner look and feel totally healthy.



Is there a cure for syphilis?

Yes, syphilis is curable with antibiotic medicine. That's why it's important to get tested even if you feel healthy.

If you learn you have syphilis, encourage your sexual partner(s) to get tested and treated. You may get syphilis again if they don't do this.

Getting tested

Testing for syphilis often involves a quick blood test. Sometimes it involves testing fluid from a sore. Both ways of testing are easy and effective.

To get tested contact your local Tribal clinic, IHS facility, or visit a local clinic.

Contact Us

Native American Community Clinic

Address:
1213 E Franklin Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55404

Phone:
(612) 872 - 8086

Website:
www.nacc-healthcare.org

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