

Syphilitic Disease

Are you at risk for syphilis? How can I reduce my risk of getting syphilis? Pregnancy, how does it affect my baby? Then the following information is important to you!



Syphilis is known as the “Great Imitator” because so many of the signs and symptoms are indistinguishable from other diseases. It is one of the oldest diseases known to humans. It is caused by a corkscrew-shaped bacterium called *Treponema pallidum*.

Syphilis is a disease that can be transmitted by direct contact with a syphilis sore during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Sores can be found around the penis, vagina, or anus, or in the rectum, on the lips, or in the mouth. Syphilis can also be spread to your unborn baby. It is treatable with antibiotics.

Syphilis is divided into stages (primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary), and there are different signs and symptoms associated with each stage. A person with **primary syphilis** generally has a sore or sores at the original site of infection. These sores usually occur on or around the genitals, around the anus or in the rectum, or in or around the mouth. These sores are usually (but not always) firm, round, and painless. Symptoms of **secondary syphilis** include skin rash, swollen lymph nodes, and fever. The signs and symptoms of primary and secondary syphilis can be mild, and they might not be noticed. During the **latent stage**, there are no signs or symptoms. **Tertiary syphilis** is associated with severe medical problems and is usually diagnosed by a doctor with the help of multiple tests. It can affect the heart, brain, and other organs of the body.

A few simple preventative measures will help keep you healthy:

- Individuals can decrease their number of sex partners
- Practice the correct and consistent use of condoms
- Establish mutually monogamous partnerships
- Pregnant women should be screened at their first prenatal visit
- Practice abstinence

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