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Division of STD Prevention (DSTDP)
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CDC-INFO Contact Center
1-800-CDC-INFO
1-800-232-4636
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If you have been diagnosed with any sexually transmitted disease (STD), your sexual partner(s) should be tested for HIV and other STDs, even if they have no symptoms. If you have been diagnosed with any STD, including HIV, you should have a blood test in three months to detect blood-borne infections you might have contracted at the time you tested positive for any STD.

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OKLAHOMA
State Department
of Health



SEXUAL HEALTH &
HARM REDUCTION
SERVICE

SYPHILIS

Facts & Info

What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that can have very serious problems when left untreated, but it is simple to cure with antibiotics.



What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can cause long-term problems if not treated correctly. Symptoms in adults are divided into stages. These stages are primary, secondary, non-primary or non-secondary and late syphilis.

How do you get syphilis?

You can get syphilis by direct contact with a syphilis sore during anal, vaginal, or oral sex. Sores can be found on the penis, vagina, anus, in the rectum, on the lips or in the mouth. Syphilis can also be spread from mother to her unborn baby during pregnancy.

Can syphilis be prevented?

The only way to avoid syphilis is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

If you are having sex, you can lower your chances of getting syphilis if you limit the number of sex partners and use a latex condom the right way, every time you have sex.

Can syphilis be cured?

Yes, syphilis can be cured with the right antibiotics. However, treatment will not fix any damage that syphilis has already done.

I've been treated.

Can I get syphilis again?

Having syphilis once does not protect from getting it again. Even after you've been successfully treated, you can still get syphilis again.

Only laboratory tests can confirm whether you have syphilis. Follow-up testing by a health care provider is recommended to make sure that your treatment was successful.

Because syphilis sores can be hidden in the vagina, anus, under the foreskin of the penis, or in the mouth, it may not be obvious that a sex partner has syphilis. Unless you know that your sex partner(s) have been tested and treated, you may be at risk of getting syphilis again from an untreated sex partner.

What are the symptoms of syphilis?

Syphilis has been called 'the great imitator' because it has so many possible symptoms, many of which look like symptoms of other diseases:

- The painless syphilis sore you might find after first getting syphilis can be confused for an ingrown hair, zipper cut, or other seemingly harmless bump.

I'm pregnant. How will syphilis affect my baby?

If you are pregnant and have syphilis, you can give the infection to your unborn baby. Having syphilis can lead to a low birth weight baby. It can also make it more likely you will deliver your baby too early or stillborn (a baby born dead).

A baby with syphilis may be born without signs or symptoms of disease. However, if not treated immediately, the baby may develop serious problems within a few weeks. Untreated babies can have health problems such as cataracts, deafness, or seizures, and can die.

To protect your baby, you should be tested for syphilis three times during your pregnancy:

- at your first prenatal visit
- during your 3rd trimester, and
- at delivery.

If you test positive, get treatment immediately.

- The non-itchy rash that develops during the second stage of syphilis can show up on the palms of your hands and soles of your feet, in other places, or all over your body.
- Syphilis can affect the vision and hearing, and can lead to permanent blindness and hearing loss.
- You could also have very mild symptoms or none at all.