

STD Facts

Syphilis (“Syph”, “The Pox”) (caused by *Treponema pallidum*, a bacteria)

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

1st Stage (primary syphilis)

- Symptoms show up 1-12 weeks after exposure
- A painless, open sore on the mouth, sex organs or anus
- Sores can be “hidden” in the vagina or rectum; sores last 1-5 weeks
- Sore goes away, but syphilis is still in the blood

2nd Stage (secondary syphilis)

- Symptoms show up 6 weeks to 6 months after sore appears
- A rash anywhere on the body
- Flu-like symptoms

Latent Stage

- No sores or rashes, but syphilis is still in the blood and can affect the heart, brain and other organs over time (tertiary syphilis)

TRANSMISSION

Syphilis is Spread by:

- Vaginal sex
- Oral sex
- Anal sex
- Infected mother to newborn

COMPLICATIONS/CONSEQUENCES

If Left Untreated, Syphilis Can Cause:

- Heart disease
- Blindness
- Brain damage

Syphilis and Pregnancy May Cause:

- Stillbirths in pregnant women
- Congenital birth defects
- Severe damage to bones, brain, lungs, liver and other organs in infected infants

PREVENTION

Recommendations to Reduce the Spread of Syphilis:

- Genital ulcer diseases can occur in genital areas that are covered or protected by a latex condom. They can also occur in areas that are not covered or protected. Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, can reduce the risk of syphilis only when the infected areas are covered or protected by the condom.
- Always use latex condoms during vaginal and anal sex
- Use a latex condom for oral sex on a penis
- Use a latex barrier for oral sex on a vagina or anus (dental dam or condom cut in half)
- Limit the number of sex partners
- Get a test from a doctor or other medical provider if infection or exposure is suspected
- Notify sex partners immediately if infected
- Make sure partners are tested and treated

TREATMENT

Treatment of Syphilis:

- Syphilis can be cured with proper medication from a doctor
- Partners should be treated at same time

NOTE: A person can be reinfected after treatment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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HIV/AIDS STD TB Hepatitis Program
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CDC National STD and AIDS Hotlines
1-800-227-8922; 1-800-243-7889 TTY