

# GET YOURSELF TESTED

Testing is confidential. If you are under 18 years old, you can consent to be checked and treated for STIs.



## What if I'm pregnant?

Syphilis can be passed from a pregnant person to the fetus (unborn baby). This is called congenital syphilis. It can be prevented with timely treatment.

This can lead to a stillbirth (the fetus dies before delivery), or the baby can die shortly after delivery.

Babies born with syphilis can have severe damage, including deafness, bone deformities, and brain damage.

Pregnant people should be tested for syphilis when they first get prenatal care. They may also be re-tested before they have the baby.

There are treatments that are safe during pregnancy, and medicines that are safe for newborn babies.

## Why does treating syphilis matter?

Syphilis can be easily cured with antibiotics from a health care provider. A long-lasting form of penicillin is the most common treatment. There are other options if you are allergic to penicillin.

Syphilis can be treated at any stage of infection. Damage to organs and the brain are permanent.

## What about my sex partner(s)?

Syphilis is spread through any type of sex (oral, vaginal, and anal). Even if your sex partners don't have any symptoms they should be checked for syphilis. If you or your partner(s) have been treated for syphilis, you should not have sex for 7 days after your treatment is over. You are at risk for getting syphilis again if your partner(s) isn't properly treated before you have sex again. You are also at risk if you have sex without a condom.

## For More Information

Contact a health care provider or your local STI clinic.

To learn more about STIs, or to find your local STI clinic, visit [www.health.ny.gov/STD](http://www.health.ny.gov/STD).

You can find other STI testing locations at <https://gettested.cdc.gov>.



Department of Health



You can get syphilis if part of your body touches the skin ulcer or rash of someone with syphilis. This happens most often during sex.



After an ulcer forms, syphilis spreads through the blood. This causes a skin rash. Later on, in some people, syphilis can cause damage to any organ of the body.



A pregnant person with syphilis can pass the infection to their unborn child. This is called congenital syphilis.

## What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI). It is caused by bacteria that enter the body during oral, vaginal, or anal sex. It can also enter the body through small cracks in the skin if an area is exposed to the bacteria. This causes a painless skin ulcer or chancre (sore) to form at the infection site.

Syphilis is a complicated infection. Many people don't notice symptoms, or symptoms heal over time. Without treatment, a person still has the infection and can infect others, even if they don't have symptoms.

Syphilis infections can increase your risk of getting HIV if you are exposed. People with both HIV and syphilis are more likely to transmit HIV to their sex partners. This risk can be reduced by:

- using condoms for any type of sex;
- the person with HIV taking their HIV medicines to become virally suppressed; and/or
- partners who are HIV negative taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to reduce their HIV risk.

## How can I prevent syphilis?

- **Use a Condom:** Use a latex or polyurethane condom every time you have oral, vaginal, or anal sex. Condoms greatly lower your risk of getting syphilis. They also help prevent pregnancy and the spread of other STIs including HIV. Use a dental dam for oral sex by placing it over the vagina or anus. Dental dams are squares of latex.
- Condoms and dams will not stop the risk of getting syphilis if they don't cover the ulcer or a syphilis rash. These may be on another part of your body or your partner's body.
- Not having sex is the only 100% effective way to avoid STIs like syphilis. If you or a partner has an open sore near or on the genitals, don't have sex.

## What if I've been exposed to syphilis?

- **Get Tested:** If you think you have been exposed, or might have syphilis, go to a health care provider. Do not have sex until you get your test results. Testing is easy, and just uses a small sample of blood from your veins. Your sex partner(s) will also need to be tested. See back for more information.
- **Get Treated:** If you do have syphilis or another STI, do not have sex until at least 7 days after you and your partner(s) finish your medicine.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

Syphilis has different stages, based on symptoms and how long someone has been infected. At each stage, people may not have any symptoms, or may not notice the symptoms.

- The **first or primary stage** involves a painless sore or sores on the genitals, rectum, or mouth.
- After the first sore(s) heals, the **secondary stage** is characterized by a rash.
- Then, during the **latent stage** there are no symptoms until the final stage which may occur years later.
- This **final or tertiary stage** can result in damage to the brain, nerves, eyes, or heart.

<b>Primary</b>	<b>(first stage)</b> 10-90 days after infection
<b>Secondary</b>	<b>(second stage)</b> 1-3 months after Primary
<b>Latent</b>	<b>(third stage)</b> years to decades after infection
<b>Tertiary</b>	<b>(final stage)</b> many years after infection