

CONGENITAL SYPHILIS

1. What is congenital syphilis (CS)?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection caused by bacteria. It is curable, but can cause serious health problems without treatment. Congenital syphilis (CS) is an infection that occurs when a pregnant person with syphilis passes the infection to their baby during pregnancy or childbirth.

2. How common is CS?

CS cases have more than tripled in recent years. Public health professionals are concerned about the growing number of cases. It is important to make sure you get tested for syphilis during your pregnancy.

3. How can CS affect a baby?

CS can have major health impacts on a baby depending on how long the pregnant person had syphilis and if (or when) they got treatment.

CS can cause:

- Miscarriage (losing the baby during pregnancy)
- Stillbirth (a baby born dead)
- Prematurity (a baby born early)
- Low birth weight
- Death shortly after birth.

For babies born with CS, CS can cause:

- Deformed bones
- Severe anemia (low blood count)
- Enlarged liver and spleen
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes)
- Brain and nerve problems, like blindness or deafness
- Meningitis
- Skin rashes

4. When should a pregnant person be tested?

Pregnant individuals should be tested for syphilis during the first prenatal visit and during the third trimester (28-32 weeks' gestation).

5. How is syphilis treated?

Syphilis can be treated and cured with antibiotics. If a pregnant person tests positive for syphilis, they must get treatment right away.

If diagnosed with and treated for syphilis, the doctor should do follow-up testing for at least one year to make sure the treatment is working.

Babies who have CS need to be treated right away or they can develop serious health problems. Depending on the results of the baby's medical evaluation, he/she may need antibiotics in a hospital for 10 days. In some cases, only one injection of antibiotic is needed.

It's also important that babies treated for CS get follow-up care to make sure the treatment worked.



Key Points

- Congenital syphilis is when a pregnant person passes syphilis to their baby during pregnancy or childbirth.
- Common symptoms of syphilis include a sore or rash, but many people don't see signs.
- Prenatal care is important to find and treat syphilis.
- Syphilis is treated and cured with antibiotics.

For More Information

Centers for
Disease Control
and Prevention
(CDC):
[Congenital
Syphilis Facts](#)



[Illinois
Department of
Public Health](#)

