

SYPHILIS

1. What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by bacteria. It is curable but can cause serious health problems without treatment. Infection develops in stages (primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary). Each stage can have different signs and symptoms. A pregnant person can pass syphilis to their baby during pregnancy or childbirth. This can cause an early birth, a miscarriage, or stillbirth. It can lead to serious health problems in babies.

2. How does syphilis spread?

Syphilis is spread by direct contact with a syphilis sore during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. It can also spread from a pregnant person with syphilis to their unborn baby. You cannot get syphilis through contact with objects, such as:

- toilet seats
- doorknobs
- swimming pools/hot tubs/bathtubs
- sharing clothing or eating utensils

3. What are the signs and symptoms?

Often people don't notice symptoms, so they don't know they're infected. Signs of syphilis may include a sore near the area where the bacteria entered the body (vagina, anus, lips, or mouth) or rash on one or more areas of the body. The symptoms may appear and disappear. The only way to know for sure is to get tested.

4. When should someone get tested?

Test if you are:

- Experiencing symptoms
- Getting tested for other STIs
- Having condomless sex and/or have multiple sex partners
- A man having sex with other men
- Pregnant (test at the first prenatal visit and the third trimester)

5. How is syphilis treated?

Syphilis is curable with the right antibiotics from your health care provider. However, treatment might not undo damage the infection caused.

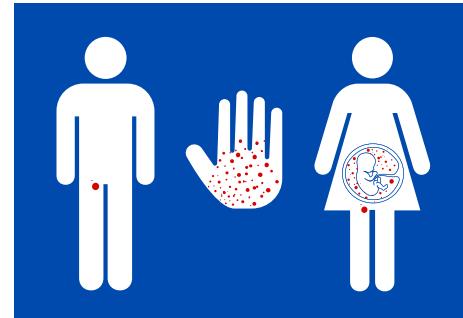
6. How can I prevent infection?

The only way to completely avoid STIs is to not have vaginal, anal, or oral sex. If sexually active, you can do the following things to lower your chances of getting syphilis:

- Being in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested and does not have syphilis.
- Using condoms the right way every time you have sex.

Condoms prevent the spread of syphilis by preventing contact with a sore.

However, sometimes sores occur in areas not covered by a condom. Contact with these sores can still transmit syphilis.



Key Points

- Syphilis and other STIs are on the rise in Illinois.
- Common symptoms of syphilis include a sore or rash, but many people don't see signs.
- Get tested for syphilis.
- Syphilis is treated and cured with antibiotics.

For More Information

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



[Syphilis is Back](#) campaign



[Illinois Department of Public Health](#)

