



Syphilis

What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*.

How is Syphilis spread?

Syphilis is spread through direct contact with the penis, vagina, mouth, or anus of an infected person with a syphilis sore. A person infected with syphilis is more susceptible to HIV infection.

How is Syphilis treated?

In the early stages of syphilis, a single injection of penicillin is the treatment of choice. More injections may be needed for someone having the disease longer than a year. Treatment will prevent further damage, but won't repair damage that has already occurred.

How can Syphilis be prevented?

- No sexual activity is the best form of protection.
- Latex condoms, when used correctly and consistently can reduce the risk of infection.
- Have sex with only one person, who is known to be uninfected and is only having sex with you.

Syphilis symptoms can be classified into 3 stages:

Primary (stage 1) – An appearance of a single sore, called a chancre, usually appearing 10-90 days after exposure, lasting 3-6 weeks.

Chancres can heal without treatment. If left untreated, syphilis infection progresses to stage **Secondary (stage 2)** – Typically starts with the appearance of a skin rash; rough red or reddish-brown spots. The rash usually appears on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet, but can appear on other areas of the body. Other symptoms can include fever, swollen glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight

loss, muscle aches and tiredness. These symptoms will resolve without treatment but the disease will progress to latent or late stage disease.

Late (stage 3) – Syphilis may progress many years without symptoms. Syphilis may cause damage to the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints. Late stage signs and symptoms include difficulty coordinating muscle movements, paralysis, dementia, numbness, and blindness.

Symptoms of Syphilis:

Primary stage symptoms:

- Chancre sore

Secondary stage symptoms:

- Skin rash – rough red or reddish brown spots
- Fever
- Swollen glands
- Sore throat
- Patchy hair loss
- Headaches
- Weight loss
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness

Late Stage symptoms:

- Difficulty coordinating muscle movements
- Paralysis
- Dementia
- Numbness
- Blindness

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