

TERTIARY STAGE SYMPTOMS

Tertiary stage syphilis is very serious. It can begin after you've had untreated syphilis for a while, possibly many years—even if you never noticed symptoms.

Symptoms of tertiary syphilis may include difficulty moving your arms and legs, paralysis, numbness, blindness, and heart disease.

WHEN SHOULD I BE TESTED?

You should be tested for syphilis right away if:

- You have any symptoms, such as a painless, round sore that may appear on your genitals or in your mouth.
- Your partner has syphilis or symptoms that might be syphilis, even if you don't have symptoms.
- Every pregnant person should be tested for syphilis. Tell your provider if you plan to become pregnant.

HOW IS SYPHILIS TREATED?

One shot of penicillin, an antibiotic, will cure a person who has had syphilis for less than a year. More doses are needed to treat someone who has had syphilis for longer than a year.

CAN I GET SYPHILIS AGAIN AFTER I'VE BEEN TREATED?

Yes, you can get syphilis again. You can get it from an untreated partner or a new partner who is infected.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T GET TREATED?

- Syphilis stays in your body if it is not treated.
- It can damage your heart, brain, eyes, and other organs. This damage may not show up for many years and could kill you.
- You might also pass the infection on to other people.

IF I HAVE SYPHILIS, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN FOR MY PARTNERS?

- Your partners may have syphilis, too.
- Be sure to tell your recent sex partners, so they can get tested and treated.
- Avoid having sex until you and your partners have finished treatment, so you don't re-infect each other.
- Avoid sexual contact with anyone if you see an unusual sore.

DOES SYPHILIS AFFECT MY RISK OF GETTING HIV?

Yes. If you have syphilis, you have a higher chance of getting HIV. If you have syphilis and HIV, you can spread both infections more easily.

a message for everyone PROTECT YOURSELF + YOUR PARTNERS

Always see a provider if you have a partner that is being treated for syphilis. You and your partners need to be treated. Also see the provider if you or your partners notice any symptoms, such as a painless red sore. If you have syphilis, you should be tested for other STIs. Be sure to tell your recent sex partners, so they can get tested too. Talk openly and honestly with your partners about syphilis and other STIs.



For more information, contact:

MULTNOMAH COUNTY STI CLINIC

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U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention



syphilis

THE FACTS



THE FACTS

- Syphilis (SI fi lis) is a sexually transmitted infection (STI).
- Anyone can get syphilis.
- Many people who have syphilis don't know it. You can have syphilis even if you don't notice any symptoms.
- The first symptom is a painless, round, and red sore that can appear anywhere you've had sex.
- You can pass syphilis to others without knowing it.
- Washing the genitals, urinating, or douching after sex will not prevent syphilis.
- Syphilis is easy to treat and cure.
- If you do not treat syphilis, it can lead to serious health problems.

HOW CAN I LOWER MY RISK FOR SYPHILIS?

- The surest way to prevent syphilis is not to have sex or to have sex only with someone who's not infected and who has sex only with you.
- Condoms can reduce your risk of getting syphilis if used the right way every single time you have sex. A condom only protects the area of the body that it covers, and areas the condom doesn't cover can still become infected.
- Get a blood test from your provider once a year in case you have syphilis and don't know it.

HOW DO PEOPLE GET SYPHILIS?

- You can get syphilis by having sex with someone who has it. "Having sex" means having oral, anal, or vaginal contact.
- You can get syphilis when your mouth, genitals, or another part of your body touches a syphilis sore on a person who has the infection.
- If you are pregnant, you can pass syphilis on to your baby, even if you don't know you are infected.

CAN I GET SYPHILIS BY HAVING ORAL SEX?

Yes. Syphilis sores can be in the mouth as well as on the genitals. If you give or receive oral sex, you may expose yourself to syphilis. This is true even if you can't see a sore. Using a condom for oral sex can reduce your risk.

CAN PREGNANT PEOPLE GET SYPHILIS?

- Yes, people can get syphilis when they are pregnant. Being pregnant does not protect you or your baby against any STI.
- If you are pregnant and you think you may have syphilis, see your provider right away because you can pass the infection to your baby during pregnancy.
- Syphilis is extremely serious for babies. Your provider can recommend medicine that is safe to take while you're pregnant.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF I HAVE SYPHILIS?

Ask your provider to give you a blood test for syphilis.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SYPHILIS?

The infection has four stages: primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary.

PRIMARY STAGE SYMPTOMS

During the primary stage of syphilis, you may have one or more painless sores on the genitals or in the mouth, anus, or rectum. The name for this type of sore is a chancre (SHANK er). The sore is likely to be wherever you had sex. If you had oral sex, it might be in your mouth or on your genitals. It does not hurt, so you might not even notice you have a sore unless you look for it.

The sore lasts 3 to 6 weeks, and it heals on its own. If you don't get treatment, the infection will progress to the next stage.

SECONDARY STAGE SYMPTOMS

During the secondary stage of syphilis, you might have a rash on your hands and feet or on other parts of your body. Syphilis rashes are often red or brown and usually don't itch. Other symptoms may include fever, sore throat, muscle aches, headaches, hair loss, and feeling tired. These symptoms may go away on their own. If you don't get treatment, the infection will progress to the next stage.

LATENT STAGE SYMPTOMS

In the latent stage of the infection, you have no symptoms, but the infection can be detected by a blood test from your provider. Syphilis can remain hidden for many years in the latent stage.

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