

What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI). It is caused by a bacteria and develops in stages. It is most contagious during the early stages of infection (*first 12 months after exposure*). Signs and symptoms may be subtle and can be easily missed. **Syphilis can be prevented and cured with antibiotics.**

**Syphilis can be passed to the baby during pregnancy or at the time of delivery. This is known as congenital syphilis.*

What are the stages of syphilis?

Primary Syphilis (Stage 1)

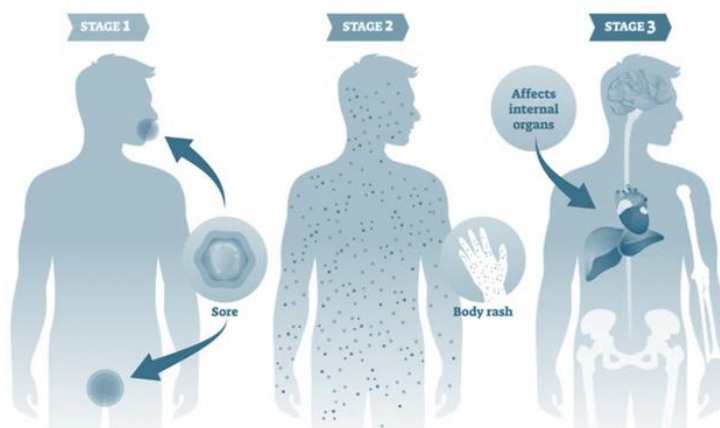
- Single or multiple painless sores, called chancres which appear 1-3 months after exposure.
- Chancres appear at the site the bacteria enters the body.

Secondary Syphilis (Stage 2)

- Skin rash, swollen lymph nodes, sore throat, fever, hair loss, muscle aches, and/or fatigue.
- Secondary symptoms occur 3-6 months after exposure.

Tertiary Syphilis (Stage 3)

- Can occur 10-30 years after the initial infection.
- Affects internal organs and can result in death.



Syphilis symptoms can disappear without treatment. You MUST get treatment to stop the infection from moving to the next stage.



How common is Syphilis?

- The number of early syphilis cases in North Carolina has gone up over the past 20 years. In 2024, 3,665 early syphilis infections were reported.
- Syphilis is more common among men, but cases among women have risen in recent years.
- Nearly 4 in 10 reported cases were in people ages 25 to 34.
- More than half (55%) of the cases reported were among Black/African-American people.

You should get tested for syphilis if you:

- Are sexually active with a new partner.
- Are in an open sexual relationship.
- Have a sex partner who tested positive for syphilis.
- Are taking PrEP or PEP for HIV and STI prevention.
- Are pregnant (**ALL pregnant women should receive syphilis testing at their first prenatal care visit, between 28 – 30 weeks gestation, and at delivery. This is NC Public Health Law.**).

How do I know if I have syphilis?

The only sure way to know is to get a blood test from a doctor or clinic.

How is syphilis treated?

- **People who test positive for syphilis should be treated as soon as it is suspected or confirmed.**
- Syphilis can be treated with Penicillin G (*given as a shot/injection*). Doxycycline can be given as an alternative treatment for people allergic to Penicillin.

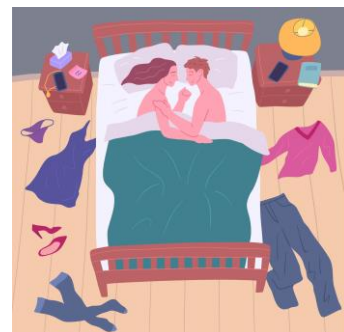
Syphilis: What you need to know

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI).

People can get it through vaginal, anal and or oral sex. It develops in stages and is most contagious during the early stages (*primary and secondary*) of the infection.



It can be hard to tell if you have syphilis. The only way to know for sure is to get tested.



If you test positive, you should get treated right away to stop the infection from progressing. Syphilis infection can be treated with antibiotics. **Sex partners should be treated as well.**



Syphilis can be passed to babies during pregnancy or delivery. Syphilis in a baby is called congenital syphilis. It can be avoided through timely testing and treatment during pregnancy.

Anyone who is pregnant should receive syphilis testing at their **first prenatal care visit, between 28-30 weeks gestation, and at delivery.**

This is NC Public Health Law

ALL babies born with syphilis must be treated right away. Some babies may not have symptoms at birth. If left untreated, babies may develop symptoms later and can die from the infection.

