



Chancroid

What is chancroid?

Chancroid is a bacterial infection that both men and women can get.

How is chancroid spread?

Chancroid is spread through contact with another person's chancroid sore during vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

What are the symptoms of chancroid?

Symptoms may include painful, draining, open sores on the skin and painful, swollen lymph nodes in the groin. Sores usually begin as tender red bumps, 4 to 7 days after sexual contact with an infected person. These sores grow and deepen and may become very painful or bleed. If the sores are in the vagina, you may experience pain or bleeding during sex, or pain when urinating. If sores are in the rectum, there may be pain or bleeding with a bowel movement.

How will I know if I have chancroid?

Your doctor or other health-care provider will collect a sample of fluid from the sore with a small swab and have it tested at a laboratory.

How is chancroid treated?

Antibiotics can cure chancroid. After you've taken all your medication, you should see your doctor again to make sure the sores have healed and that the infection is completely cleared.

What happens if chancroid is left untreated?

Left untreated, chancroid can cause serious damage to the skin and genitals. Like other STDs, if left untreated, chancroid can also increase a person's chance of getting or spreading HIV. If you have symptoms or think you've been exposed to chancroid, get examined and treated immediately to avoid any complications.

Do sex partners have to be treated?

Yes. If you're diagnosed with chancroid, it's important to tell everyone you've had sex with over the past 10 days, so they can be examined and treated, too. Take *all* your medication as directed, even if you feel better before the medicine is finished. Don't have sex until you and the people you've had sex with have been completely treated and all symptoms have disappeared, or you could infect each other again.

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Chancroid, *Continued*

What if I'm pregnant?

We don't know of any serious effects on the baby of having chancroid during pregnancy, but you should let your provider know that you're pregnant when you seek treatment for chancroid.

All pregnant women should be tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, as early as possible in pregnancy. You should be tested again during your pregnancy if you are at higher risk for getting an STD. For example, you are at higher risk if you have a new partner during pregnancy, or if you have more than one partner. If left untreated, STDs can be devastating for your baby. To protect yourself and your baby against HIV and other STDs, use a latex condom whenever you have sex.

How can I avoid chancroid?

Latex condoms may be helpful in preventing the spread of chancroid, but only when the infected area is covered or protected by the condom. If there is contact with an open sore, chancroid can be transmitted to areas not protected by a condom.

Sexually transmitted infections can be avoided by not having sex. *If you are sexually active*, you can reduce your risk of getting chancroid and most other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, by having sex only in a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner you are sure is not infected. If you are having sex outside of such a relationship, you can reduce your risk of STDs by:

- 1) *Always using a latex condom (or other type of latex barrier) whenever you have sex – vaginal, anal, or oral.* Condoms made of "natural" materials, such as lambskin, protect against pregnancy, but not against STDs. If you are allergic to latex, you can use condoms made of polyurethane or other synthetic materials.
- 2) *Limiting the number of people you have sex with.*
The more partners you have, the higher your risk.
- 3) *Avoiding alcohol and drugs when you have sex.* Drinking or getting high makes it much harder to remember to use condoms to protect yourself and others. For free, confidential help with a substance abuse problem, call 1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638), or just call 311.

More information

Free, confidential STD exams and treatment, and confidential or anonymous HIV counseling and testing, are available at Health Department clinics in all 5 boroughs of New York City. Health insurance, proof of citizenship, and parental consent are NOT required. For a list of clinics and hours, visit nyc.gov/health, or call 311.

