

Syphilis

Syphilis is a bacterial infection that spreads through vaginal, anal and oral sex. It can also be passed from a pregnant person to their baby during pregnancy. Syphilis can spread through kissing if there are syphilis sores in the mouth or on the lips.

Symptoms

Most people with syphilis never notice any symptoms. Symptoms include:

- Painless, open sores called chancres that can occur on skin exposed during sex (genitals, anus, mouth)
- Rash, especially on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet
- Patchy hair loss, fever, swollen lymph glands, weight loss, muscle aches and fatigue



Syphilis

Prevention

Condoms and dental dams can prevent the spread of syphilis, but only if they cover the chancre (sore). Having multiple partners increases your risk of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including syphilis.

Testing

Your health care provider will test for syphilis with a blood sample.

Treatment

Symptoms of syphilis eventually disappear with or without treatment, but without treatment, the infection stays in the body and can continue to cause harm.

An injection of antibiotics is the best treatment for syphilis. Your health care provider will administer at least one injection (sometimes up to three injections). The full treatment is needed to clear

the infection, so it is important to complete treatment. You should be retested after three months to make sure the infection cleared.

Why Get Treatment

If left untreated, syphilis stays in the body. Even if the symptoms disappear, syphilis can damage your heart, brain and nervous system, and eventually lead to death.

Having syphilis also makes it more likely to get or transmit HIV.

Sex Partners

Your sex partners also need to be treated so they do not develop serious health issues, reinfect you or pass on the infection to others.

You should tell all of your sex partners from the previous three to 12 months about your infection so they can be evaluated. Your health care provider will help you

determine which partners you should contact.

Syphilis and Pregnancy

All pregnant people should be tested for syphilis and other STIs, including HIV, as early as possible in pregnancy. A pregnant person with syphilis can pass on the infection to their baby during pregnancy. This is called congenital syphilis. Congenital syphilis can cause stillbirth, premature birth, low infant birth weight, or death shortly after birth.

New York City Sexual Health Clinics provide confidential, low- to no-cost services including STI and HIV testing.

To find a clinic, visit **nyc.gov/health/clinics**.