



# What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that can have very serious complications when left untreated, but it is simple to cure with the right treatment.

- It's divided into three stages with primary and secondary being the most infectious stages of the disease.
- Without appropriate treatment, long-term infection can result in severe medical problems affecting the heart, brain, and other organs of the body.
- Having syphilis also makes it easier to get HIV.

**Syphilis**  
IS ON THE RISE



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# What does syphilis look like?

Syphilis is divided into stages (primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary), and there are different signs and symptoms associated with each stage.

- **Primary syphilis** generally has a sore or sores at the original site of infection. These sores usually occur on or around the genitals, around the anus or in the rectum, or in or around the mouth. These sores are usually (but not always) firm, round, and painless.
- **Secondary syphilis** include skin rash, swollen lymph nodes, and fever. The signs and symptoms of primary and secondary syphilis can be mild, and they might not be noticed.
- During the **latent stage**, there are no signs or symptoms.
- **Tertiary syphilis** is associated with severe medical problems and is usually diagnosed by a doctor with the help of multiple tests. It can affect the heart, brain, and other organs of the body.

# How can I reduce my risk of getting syphilis?

- Abstain from intercourse- not having vaginal, anal, or oral sex
- To lower your chances of getting syphilis:
  - Being in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested for syphilis and does not have syphilis
  - Using latex condoms correctly

## Am I at risk for syphilis?

- Any sexually active person can get syphilis through unprotected sex
- Have an honest and open talk with your health care provider and ask whether you should be tested for syphilis or other STDs.

## I'm pregnant. How does syphilis affect my baby?

If you are and have syphilis, you can give the infection to your unborn baby.

- Can lead to a low birth weight baby.
- Can deliver your baby too early or stillborn (a baby born dead)
- To protect your baby, **please ask your Ob provider to be tested for syphilis.**

An infected baby may be born without signs or symptoms of disease. Untreated babies can have health problems such as cataracts, deafness, or seizures, and can die.

Source CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/sam/>