

SYPHILIS FACTS

(Caused by *Treponema pallidum*, a bacteria)

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Syphilis is a disease of stages:

1st Stage (primary)

- Symptoms show up 0-90 days after exposure
- A painless, open sore on the mouth, sex organs, or anus
- Sores can be “hidden” in the vagina or rectum, sores last 1-6 weeks
- Sore goes away, but the person is still infected
- If untreated goes to 2nd stage

2nd Stage (secondary syphilis)

- Symptoms show up 6 weeks to 6 months after sore appears
- A rash can appear anywhere on the body including the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet
- Patchy hair loss is possible
- Flu-like symptoms are possible
- Symptoms of the 2nd stage go away, but the person is still infected
- If untreated goes to 3rd stage

3rd Stage (Latent syphilis)

- There are no symptoms, but the person is still infected
- At this state the infection can cause heart disease, blindness, brain damage, and mental illness

COMPLICATIONS

If left untreated, syphilis can:

- Lead to heart disease
- Lead to blindness
- Lead to brain damage
- Lead to mental illness

Syphilis and pregnancy:

- May be passed to the unborn baby during pregnancy
- Can lead to stillbirths (baby is born dead)
- Can cause congenital birth defects like mental retardation
- Can cause severe damage to bones, brain, lungs, liver and other organs in infected babies

TRANSMISSION

Syphilis is spread by:

- Vaginal sex
- Oral sex
- Anal sex
- Skin-to-skin contact with the infected area
- Passed from mother to unborn child during pregnancy

PREVENTION

Recommendations to reduce the spread of syphilis Infection:

- Abstinence is the only sure way to prevent infection
- Always use latex condoms consistently and correctly during vaginal, oral and anal sex
- Limit your number of sex partners
- To prevent re-infection, notify all sex partners immediately to make sure they are tested and treated

TREATMENT

- Can be cured with proper medication

***A PERSON CAN BE RE-
INFECTED AFTER
TREATMENT, SO...***

- All persons whom you have had sex with during the last:
 - a. 3 months if you are in the 1st stage
 - b. 6 1/2 months if you are in the 2nd stage
 - c. 12 months if you are in 3rd stage should immediately be evaluated and treated
- To avoid re-infection, do not have sex until you and all of your sex partner(s) are:
 - finished with the treatment
 - and*
 - completely healed from any sores/lesions/signs of the infection

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/std_control.asp