



## MEN AND WOMEN

The disease has four stages:  
Primary, Secondary, Latent, & Tertiary.

### Primary Stage Symptoms

During the primary stage of syphilis, you may have one or more painless sores on the genitals or in the mouth, anus, or rectum. This type of sore is called a chancre (SHANK er). The sore is likely to be wherever you had sex. If you had oral sex, it might be in your mouth or genitals. It does not hurt, so you might not even notice you have a sore unless you look for it. The sore lasts 3 to 6 weeks, and it heals on its own. The disease will progress to the next stage if you don't get treatment.

### Secondary Stage Symptoms

During the secondary stage of syphilis, you might have a rash on your hands and feet or other parts of your body. Syphilis rashes are often red or brown and usually don't itch. Other symptoms may include fever, sore throat, muscle aches, headaches, hair loss, and tiredness. These symptoms may go away on their own. The disease will progress to the next stage if you don't get treatment.

### Latent Stage Symptoms

In the latent stage of the disease, you have no symptoms, but a blood test from your doctor can detect the disease. Syphilis can remain hidden for many years in the latent stage.

### Tertiary Stage Symptoms

Tertiary-stage syphilis is very serious. It can begin after you've had untreated syphilis for a while, possibly many years—even if you never noticed symptoms. Symptoms of tertiary syphilis may include difficulty moving your arms and legs, paralysis, numbness, blindness, and heart disease.

### When Should I Be Tested?

You should be tested for syphilis right away if:

- You have any symptoms, such as a painless, round sore that may appear on your genitals or mouth.
- Your partner has syphilis or symptoms that might be syphilis, even if you don't have symptoms.
- Every pregnant woman should be tested for syphilis. Tell your doctor if you plan to become pregnant.

### What Happens If I Don't Get Treated?

Syphilis stays in your body if it is not treated. It can damage your heart, brain, eyes, and other organs. This damage may not show up for many years and could kill you. You might also pass the disease on to other people.

### Does Syphilis Affect My Risk of Getting HIV?

Yes. If you have syphilis, you have a higher chance of getting HIV. If you have syphilis and HIV, you can spread both diseases more easily.



Scan the Code  
to find STI testing  
centers near you.

Or, go to [whitmancountypublichealth.org](http://whitmancountypublichealth.org)  
under Community Health and select the  
Sexually Transmitted Infections page.

**#GETTESTED  
& WEAR PROTECTION**

# THE FACTS



Whitman County  
Public Health

**#GETTESTED  
& WEAR PROTECTION**

Many people who have syphilis don't know it. You can have syphilis, even if you don't notice any symptoms.

The first symptom is a painless, round, red sore that can appear anywhere you've had sex.

You can pass syphilis to others without knowing it.

Washing the genitals, urinating, or douching after sex will not prevent syphilis.

Syphilis is easy to treat and cure.

If you do not treat syphilis, it can lead to serious health problems.

## How Does Someone Get Syphilis?

- You can get syphilis by having sex with someone who has it. "Having sex" means having oral, anal, or vaginal contact.
- You can get syphilis when your mouth, genitals, or another part of your body touches a syphilis sore on a person with the disease. Sores may be difficult to see.
- If you are pregnant, you can pass syphilis on to your baby even if you don't know you are infected. Syphilis is extremely serious for babies. Your doctor can recommend a medicine that is safe to take while you're pregnant.

## How Can I Lower My Risk For Syphilis?

- The surest way to prevent syphilis is not to have sex or to have sex only with someone who's not infected and has sex only with you.
- Condoms can reduce your risk of getting syphilis if used correctly every single time you have sex. But a condom protects only the area it covers. Areas the condom doesn't cover can become infected.
- Using drugs or alcohol may increase your risk of getting syphilis.
- Get a blood test from your doctor once a year in case you have syphilis and don't know it.

## Can I Get Syphilis Again After I've Been Treated?

- Yes, you can get syphilis again. You can get it from an untreated partner or a new partner who is infected.

## If I Have Syphilis, What Does That Mean For My Partner?

- Your partner may have syphilis, too.
- Be sure to tell your recent sex partners so that they can get tested and treated.
- Avoid having sex until you've both been treated so you don't re-infect each other.
- Avoid sexual contact with anyone if you see an unusual sore.

## How Can I Find Out If I Have Syphilis?

- Ask your doctor to give you a blood test for syphilis.

## How Is Syphilis Treated?

- One shot of penicillin, an antibiotic, will cure a person who has had syphilis for less than a year. More doses are needed to treat someone who has had syphilis for longer than a year.