

Yorkshire MESMAC

Sexual Health Leaflet.

Syphilis



www.mesmac.co.uk

This leaflet is designed for men who have sex with men. It provides you with information about syphilis.

What is it?

- Syphilis is a bacterial infection that is passed on through either having sexual contact with a person who has a syphilis sore (ulcer) or through unsafe injecting practices.

How is Syphilis passed on?

- You can catch syphilis through anal sex, vaginal sex, oral sex, rimming and fisting. Using condoms and gloves reduces the risk of transmission, but does not eliminate it, as they may not cover the ulcer.
- You can also catch syphilis via blood, such as sharing needles or equipment when injecting drugs.

What do you do if you think you have it?

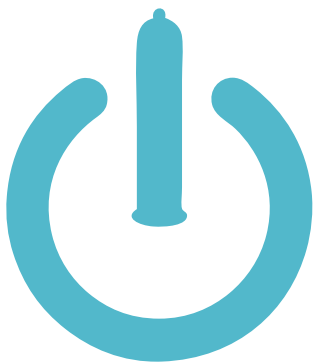
- If you have had any of the symptoms of syphilis then you should go to a Sexual Health Clinic. They will take a swab test from the ulcer if you have one, or take a blood sample to detect antibodies to syphilis. They will also offer tests for other infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea and HIV. If you are found to have syphilis, it is easily treated with antibiotics, usually as an injection.
- You can ask your GP for a blood test, but they will not usually be able to provide treatment.
- It is possible to become infected with syphilis without getting any symptoms, or not really noticing the symptoms. It is therefore recommended that you have a check up with each new sexual partner, or if you have multiple partners, every three months.

How do you prevent yourself from getting it?

- You can significantly reduce your risk of catching syphilis by using condoms and water or silicone based lube for sex, dental dams for rimming and gloves for fisting. It is best not to share sex toys and clean them thoroughly after every use.

What are the symptoms of syphilis?

- The symptoms of syphilis occur in three stages.
- The first stage of syphilis begins with a painless, but highly infectious sore. This can occur anywhere on the body, but mainly happens on the genitals or sometimes around the mouth. If somebody else comes into close contact with the sore, typically during sex, they can also become infected. The sore lasts two to six weeks before disappearing.
- In the second stage of syphilis, you may develop tiredness, a rash and a sore throat. These will disappear after a few weeks. You can get other problems including deafness, patchy hair loss, eye problems and inflammation in the liver & kidneys. You can also get wart like growths in your genital area.
- Without treatment, around a third of people with syphilis enter into the third stage. This usually happens ten years or more following infection. It is rare to see people with third stage syphilis these days because the infection is usually caught early enough for treatment. In this stage, untreated syphilis can cause serious damage to your body.
- You are only infectious to other people in the first and second stages of syphilis.



Turn on to sexual health.

Yorkshire MESMAC

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For more information, contact 0113 244 4209 or visit mesmac.co.uk