

How is Syphilis treated?

Although a serious disease that can cause major damage to your health, the good news is that the sooner Syphilis is diagnosed, the simpler it is to treat. Most early diagnosed cases can be treated with one shot of antibiotics. If you have HIV, Syphilis can be harder to treat so it is particularly important that it is treated early.



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NHS Choices. (2016) Syphilis [Online]
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Introducing SYPHILIS

The
Great Mimic

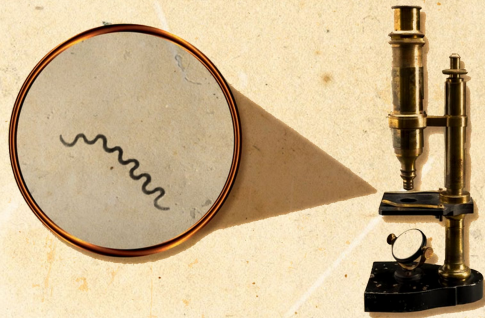
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What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a serious bacterial infection most commonly transmitted during unprotected anal or vaginal sex, it can also be passed on during oral sex, especially in the early infectious phase when someone is unlikely to know they have it. It can also be passed by close physical contact with a Syphilis sore or by sharing injecting equipment.

Pregnant women with Syphilis can also pass the infection to their unborn baby.



How do I prevent getting Syphilis?

The best way to reduce risk during sex is by using condoms and water based lubricant, condoms or dental dams for oral sex including rimming and gloves for fisting. It's safest not to share sex toys but if you do, cleaning them thoroughly and using/changing a condom on the sex toy after each person will reduce the risk of transmission.



What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of Syphilis typically occur in three main stages but many people have no or vague symptoms, which is why Syphilis is known as 'the great mimic':

The first stage:

A painless but very infectious sore appears (this is called a Chancre). This can develop anywhere on the body it might not even be visible, but usually it appears in the genital area, bum or mouth. The sore can last two to six weeks before disappearing. If you don't get treatment at this stage, Syphilis may progress to the second stage.



The second stage:

This stage is marked by a number of symptoms such as a blotchy red rash that can appear anywhere on the body, including on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet. You may also get flu-like symptoms, such as tiredness, headaches, joint pains and a high temperature. These symptoms usually pass within a few weeks, although they may come and go over several months. If you don't get treatment at this stage, it may progress to the 3rd stage.



The third stage:

Without treatment, Syphilis can last for years without any symptoms. Eventually, it can spread to parts of the body such as the brain or nerves and cause serious and potentially life-threatening problems.

It is possible to become infected with Syphilis without getting any symptoms, therefore it's recommended that you have a check-up after each new sexual partner or every three months if you have multiple partners. If Syphilis is picked up, it's recommended that you don't have any sex, including oral, for at least 1 week after single injection treatment; ideally 2 weeks to make sure the infection is fully treated. If you need more treatment you need to wait until this is finished and any regular partner has had their shots too, so you don't get it back again.