

# Syphilis The Facts

As this brochure contains only general information, professional advice from your medical practitioner should be sought before applying the information in this brochure to particular circumstances. You should not rely on any information contained in this brochure without first obtaining professional advice.



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# SYPHILIS - THE FACTS

## What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*.

## How do people get Syphilis?

Syphilis is passed through vaginal, anal or oral sex without a condom. Pregnant women can transmit syphilis to their unborn baby.

## What are the signs and symptoms in adults?

You may not notice the symptoms. There are three stages of syphilis:

**Primary stage:** One or more painless sores (chancres) may appear on the body. This occurs usually around the penis or vagina. Sores also can occur on the lips and in the mouth. The sores are painless and appear to be firm, round, and small lasting for 3 to 6 weeks. The sore usually heals by itself, but if treatment is given at this stage then the secondary stage of syphilis can be prevented.

**Secondary stage:** Starts with the development of a non itchy rash on one or more areas of the body. In addition to the rash other symptoms like fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches, and fatigue. Without treatment the infection will progress to a latent and late stage of Syphilis.

**Latent and late stage:** The latent stage may last for years and develops 10-20 years after acquiring the infection. This may lead to damage of the internal organs like the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones and joints.

## What are the complications of Syphilis?

If left untreated it can lead to serious health problems. Genital sores (chancres) caused by syphilis increases the risk to acquire and transmit HIV infection sexually.

## How is Syphilis diagnosed?

Syphilis is easily diagnosed by a simple blood test.

## What is the treatment for Syphilis?

Syphilis is cured with penicillin. However, you can get syphilis again, even if you have had it before.

