

Syphilis Fact Sheet

Syphilis, caused by bacterium *Treponema pallidum*, is often indistinguishable from other diseases resulting in late complications when left untreated.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Often indistinguishable from other diseases and may disappear without treatment.
- Individuals may not have symptoms,
- If symptoms occur, usually appear 1 to 3 weeks after exposure.

Symptoms include:

- Sore/s (chancres) on external genitals (vagina, penis, anus, or rectum) or lips or mouth (usually small, firm, round, and painless). Can last between 2 to 5 weeks.
- Skin rash (rough, red, or reddish brown spots on palms of the hands and bottoms of the feet). Can also appear on trunk. May appear as rough, red, or reddish brown spots. Rash is usually not itchy.
- Fever
- Swollen lymph glands
- Sore throat
- Patchy hair loss
- Headaches
- Weight Loss
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue

TRANSMISSION

- Vaginal, anal, or oral sex
- Infected mother to newborn

COMPLICATIONS/CONSEQUENCES

If untreated syphilis infections may result in:

- Damage to the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints
- Paralysis, numbness, gradual blindness, and dementia
- Death
- Difficulty in motor coordination
- Increased risk for acquiring HIV

If untreated in pregnancy, syphilis can lead to:

- Increased risk of having a stillbirth
- If baby is untreated, it may become developmentally delayed, have seizures, or die

TREATMENT

Treatment should include medication prescribed by a health care provider (commonly penicillin).

PREVENTION

- Abstain from sexual contact
- Maintain mutually monogamous relationship with a tested, uninfected partner
- Appropriate use of latex condoms consistently and correctly during vaginal, anal, and oral sex on a penis
- Appropriate use of latex barrier for oral sex on a vagina or anus
- Avoidance of sexual contact with a partner until treatment is completed
- Appropriate treatment of partner

Recommendations for prohibiting the spread of infection:

- Discontinue sexual contact if signs or symptoms occur
- Screening test during pregnancy
- Notify all recent sex partners if infected
- Seek medical attention if sore or rash develops

Contact Information:

For more information pertaining to Florida clinical services, sites, and treatment recommendations please visit us on the web at http://www.doh.state.fl.us/disease_ctrl/std/clinical/clinical.html or email us at: HSD_STD@doh.state.fl.us.

National STD Hotline

1-800-227-8922 (24 hrs, 7 days a week)

Spanish

1-800-344-7432 (8am-2pm EST, 7 days a week)

Hearing Impaired

1-800-243-7889 (10am-10pm EST, Mon.-Fri.)