

References

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SYPHILIS

Transmission - Symptoms - Treatment

WHAT IS SYPHILIS?

Syphilis is a common bacterial infection or sexually transmitted disease caused by the spirochete *Treponema pallidum*, that causes chancre sores, blisters, or ulcers around your mouth, oral cavity, or genital areas. Syphilis may also be passed from mother to fetus during pregnancy. Some stages of syphilis are not painful and therefore may go undetected or may be mistaken for something else. However, early detection and treatment of the disease is important as syphilis may become very serious and pose health problems such as brain damage, paralysis, and blindness (among other conditions) in adults, or miscarriage, early delivery, and stillbirth (among other conditions) in pregnant women. See your physician if you suspect contracting syphilis. Your physician will determine the proper course of antibiotic treatment.

STAGES OF SYPHILIS

Primary Stage

Appears as a painless chancre sore. May be single or multiple chancres. Characterized as round, raised, firm borders, or open lesions. Range in size between 0.5 to 2cm.

Secondary Stage

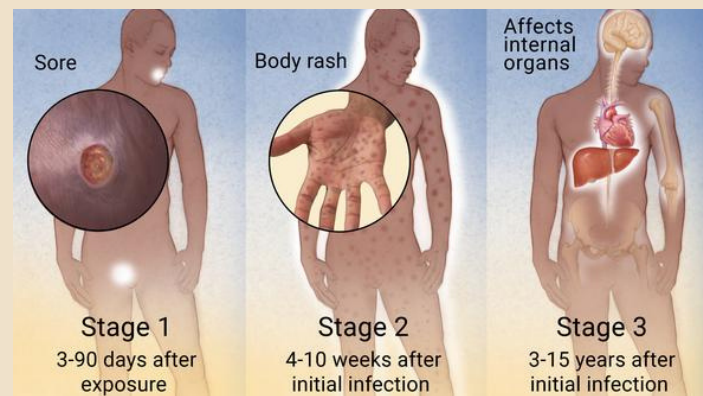
Appear as rashes that begin on the trunk and extend to the palm of your hands, the soles of your feet, and other areas of your body. Infection must be treated to avoid the progression to the tertiary stage.

Tertiary Stage

Poses serious health risks and may appear as tumors, blindness, and paralysis. May damage your nervous system, brain, and other organs which may lead to death.

Congenital Syphilis

Transmission from an infected mother to her fetus during pregnancy. Characteristics include seizures, saddle nose, and mental retardation. Primary and secondary stage syphilis pose the greatest risks. If undiagnosed or untreated, the fetus may develop Hutchinson's teeth, interstitial keratitis, and deafness.



TRANSMISSION

Syphilis can be transmitted from one person to another via direct contact with a chancre sore. This usually occurs as a direct result of anal, oral, or vaginal sex with an infected person. Other sources of infection include sharing needles and injection equipment, blood transfusions, or gestational periods (mother to fetus).

SYMPTOMS

Chancre sore, ulcer, or mucocutaneous lesions. Early signs of syphilis may not carry symptoms and may even be mistaken for pimples or rashes. Symptoms of secondary syphilis may include mild flu-like symptoms, sore throat, swollen glands, headaches, and muscle aches. More serious symptoms include cranial nerve dysfunction, vision or hearing impairment, and cardiac problems.

TREATMENT

May be treated and cured at any stage with antibiotics. Possible effects on the body may not be reversed. Early detection and management is key. Treatment for newborns includes antibiotics and hospital monitoring for 10 days to ensure they don't develop any serious health issues.

PREVENTION

Test regularly. Maintain routine dental visits. Your clinician may assist in the early detection of extraoral and intraoral lesions. Use condoms during sexual intercourse and avoid sharing any needles.