



Syphilis Fact Sheet

Syphilis, commonly known as "the great imitator", has lots of symptoms that are similar to other STDs. If left untreated, it can lead to serious consequences.

Symptoms: It progresses through two stages

Primary Stage

- May not have symptoms
- Sore (chancre) on external genitals or lips and mouth, depending on where it entered the body

Secondary Stage

- Often non-itchy skin rash (rough, reddish and brown spots) on palms of hands and soles of feet
- Skin rash throughout rest of body

Transmitted through:

- Vaginal, anal, or oral sex
- Infected mother to newborn during vaginal childbirth

Prevention:

- Abstinence
- Appropriate use of latex condoms consistently and correctly during any kind of sex
- Appropriate use of latex barrier for oral sex on a vagina or anus
- Making sure sexual partner is checked and treated

Treatment: Can be cured

- Medication prescribed by a health care provider
- Usually an antibiotic like penicillin

Consequences without treatment:

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

Consequences without treatment in pregnancy:

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

Contact Information