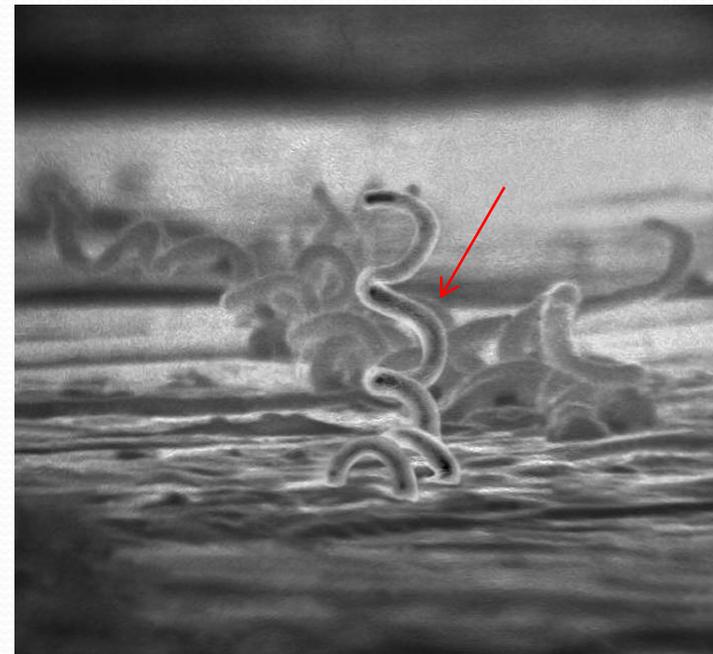


Syphilis

What is syphilis?

- **Syphilis** is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by a bacterium, *Treponema pallidum*.
- Syphilis can cause long-term complications and/or death if not adequately treated.

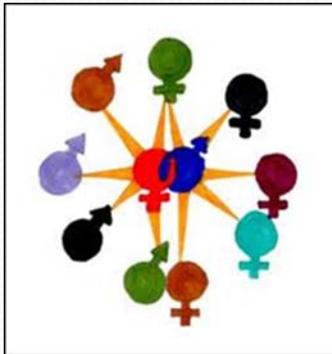


Electron micrograph of *Treponema pallidum* on cultures of cotton-tail rabbit epithelium cells.
CDC/ Dr. David Cox

How do people get syphilis?

Syphilis is transmitted from person to person by direct contact with syphilis sores.

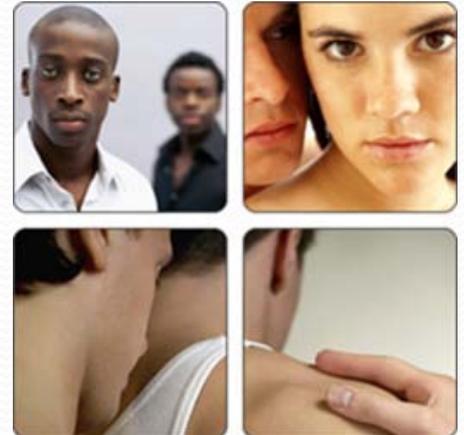
- Sexual activity
- Infected mother to her baby during vaginal childbirth
- Needle stick injury or sharing needle



Who is susceptible to syphilis?

**Anyone who is sexually active can get syphilis
but those at greater risk include:**

- Injection drug users
- Healthcare workers
- Sexual/household contacts with people with any STD
- Homosexual men
- Heterosexual with multiple partners
- Infants born to infected mothers
- Persons diagnosed with any STD
- Persons with a new sex partner



What are the symptoms of Syphilis?

The course of syphilis is divided into three stages, each with different symptoms.

Primary Syphilis - The first symptoms generally start 10 to 90 days (average 21 days) after infection with syphilis.

- Single sore or lesion (firm, round, small, and painless).
- The sore appears at the location where syphilis entered the body.
- The sore lasts 3-6 weeks, and it will heal on its own.

✓ If adequate treatment is not administered, the infection progresses to the secondary stage.



What are the symptoms of Syphilis? (cont)

Secondary Stage

- Skin rashes (itchless, rough, red, or reddish brown spots) both on the palms of the hands / the bottoms of the feet
- Sores in the mouth, vagina or anus (also called mucous membrane lesions)
- Large, raised, gray or white lesions may develop in warm, moist areas such as the mouth, underarm or groin region.
- Fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches, and fatigue.
- The symptoms of secondary syphilis will go away with or without treatment.

- ✓ Without appropriate treatment, the infection will progress to the latent and possibly late stages of disease.



Example of a secondary palmar rash

What are the symptoms of Syphilis? (cont)

Late and Latent Stages

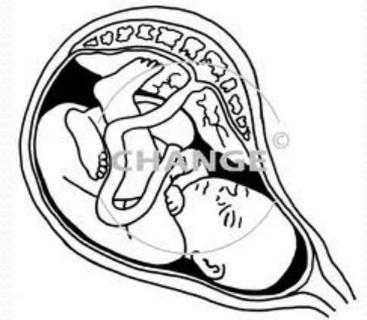
- The latent (hidden) stage , no symptoms of syphilis begin when primary and secondary symptoms disappear and can last for long years.
- Late stage can appear 10–30 years after infection began.
- Syphilis damages important organs such as the nerves, liver, heart, and brain and this damage can result in death.

Symptoms of the late stage of syphilis include:

- Difficulty coordinating muscle movements
- Paralysis
- Numbness
- Gradual blindness
- Dementia

How does syphilis affect babies?

- Babies born with syphilis may have many health problems.
 - Low birth weight
 - Premature delivery
 - Stillbirth
- Untreated babies can have many health problems
 - Cataracts
 - Deafness
 - Seizures
 - Infant death



How is syphilis diagnosed?

- Blood test



Who should be tested for syphilis?

- Pregnant women
- Men who have sex with men
- People infected with HIV
- People having partner(s) who have tested positive for syphilis

How is syphilis treated?

- Syphilis is treated with antibiotics
- Persons treated for syphilis must abstain from sexual contact with new partners until the syphilis sores are completely healed.
- Persons with syphilis must notify their sex partners so that they also can be tested and treated if necessary.



How can syphilis be prevented?



- Correct and consistent use of latex condoms can reduce the risk of syphilis when the sore or site of potential exposure is covered.
 - Contact with a sore outside of the area covered by a latex condom can still cause infection.
- It is best to abstain from sex while any sore is present in the genital, anal, or oral area.
- Avoid sharing needles if you are drug user.
- To protect their babies, pregnant women should be tested for syphilis during the pregnancy, and seek immediate treatment, if positive.
- It is important that sex partners talk to each other about their HIV status and history of other STDs so that preventive action can be taken.