

Protect yourself.

What about sex?

Not having sex is your best protection against syphilis and other STD. Having sex with only one uninfected partner who only has sex with you is also safe.

Other ways to protect yourself:

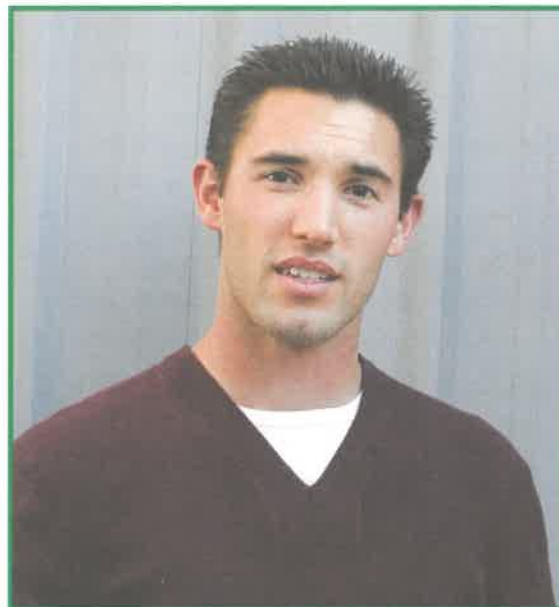
- **Use latex condoms** with a water-based lubricant every time you have sex. Both men and women should carry condoms.
- **Use plastic (polyurethane) condoms** if you're allergic to latex. These come in both male and female styles.
- **Get checked for syphilis and other STD** regularly. Ask your health care provider to help you decide how often and which tests you should have.
- **If you have more than one sex partner**, get an STD check any time you're concerned about risk, even if you don't have symptoms.
- **Don't have sex** with a person who you think may have an STD.

.....
Don't use drugs or alcohol when you might have sex.
If you're high, you might forget to protect yourself.

Syphilis can be cured.

See a health care provider.

- **Syphilis can be cured with penicillin.** Usually the treatment is a single shot. Advanced syphilis needs longer treatment.
- **If you are given pills, be sure to take all of them.** Syphilis may come back if you don't.
- **Wait to have sex.** Ask your provider how long after treatment you must wait.
- **Tell your sex partner(s).** Your partner must be treated, too. Otherwise he or she could pass syphilis to someone else or back to you.



I always use a condom when I have sex. It's the smart thing to do.

.....
It's very important to treat syphilis right away.
.....

To Learn More

CDC-INFO

1-800-232-4636

Professional models were used in all photos.
This brochure is not intended as a substitute for your health professional's opinion or care.
Written by Katherine Forrest, MD.
Reviewed 2012. Revised 2006. ©1989 ETR Associates.
All rights reserved. It is a violation of U.S. copyright law to reproduce any portion of this publication.
Available in Spanish

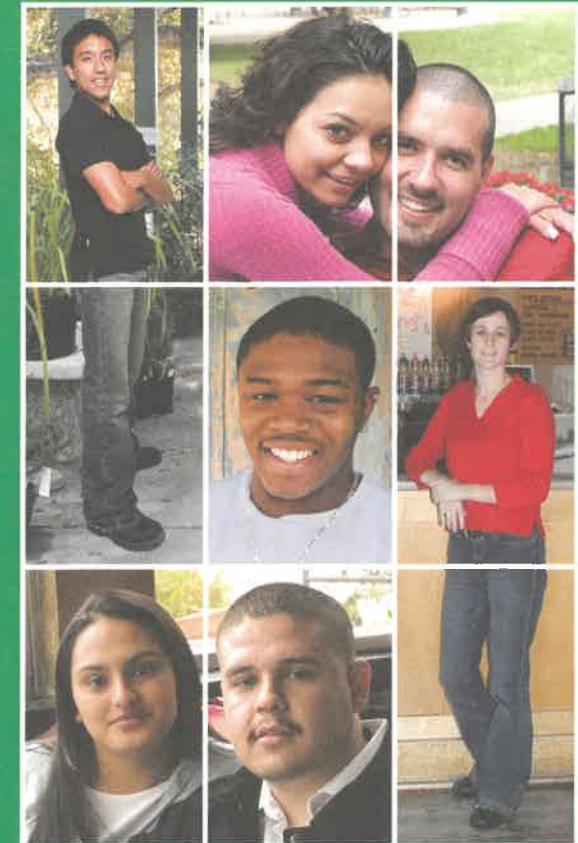


1-800-321-4407
www.etr.org/pub

A nonprofit organization

Title No. 185

Syphilis



What is syphilis?

Syphilis is an STD (sexually transmitted disease).

It's spread from person to person during vaginal, anal or oral sex. Anal sex is particularly risky.

Other names for syphilis are syph, pox or bad blood.

Why is it serious?

Syphilis stays in your body if you don't get treated.

- **People who have syphilis** and don't get treated may get syphilis in the brain, spinal cord, heart or other parts of the body.
- **Untreated syphilis** can make a person blind, paralyzed or mentally ill, even years after the original infection.
- **A mother with syphilis** can give it to her baby during pregnancy. Syphilis may cause a miscarriage or the baby may be sick when it is born.

.....
You must get treated to be cured.
If you don't get treated, the syphilis stays in your body and can cause problems later.

What are the symptoms?

Syphilis is an STD with several stages.

First symptoms show up 1 to 12 weeks after having sex.

- **Men** usually notice symptoms unless the syphilis is in the anus.
- **Many women** don't have any symptoms.

A person with syphilis may notice:

- **A skin sore called a chancre** (shanker). There may be more than one sore. Sores may be small or large (from 1/8 inch to 1 1/2 inches). They usually don't hurt.
- **Men may have sores** on the penis or scrotum, around the anus or on the mouth.
- **Women may have sores** on the lips of the vagina, inside the vagina, around the anus or on the mouth.
- **Lymph glands** near the sore may be swollen.

.....
If you have any symptoms, ask your doctor about a test for syphilis.

The syphilis sore will go away after 2 to 6 weeks.

- **This happens even without treatment**, but it doesn't mean the person is cured.
- **The syphilis is still in the body** and can show up again in other ways.

As the sore heals, or several weeks after it heals, the person may:

- **Feel sick all over**, like having the flu.
- **Have fever**, aches, poor appetite, sore throat, headache or swollen glands.
- **Have a skin rash** all over the body, in the mouth, on the palms of the hands, or on the sex organs.
- **Sometimes have hair loss**, a cough, or eye, brain, nerve, bowel, stomach, liver or kidney problems.

The rash and flu-like symptoms will go away without treatment. **But the person still isn't cured.**

Could I have it?

Get checked.

- **The only way to know for sure** if you have syphilis is to go to a health care provider or clinic.
- **If you have a sore**, there is a test to check whether it's syphilis. If you have any genital sores, ask for a syphilis test.
- **Even if you don't have a sore**, a special blood test can tell if you've been infected.
- **Pregnant women** should have a blood test for syphilis, to protect themselves and their babies.



I got checked for syphilis and learned how to protect myself.