

Syphilis

1. What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by bacteria (germs) that is curable with medication. If left untreated, it can cause serious health problems.

2. How is syphilis spread?

You can get syphilis by having contact with a syphilis sore (chancere) during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Sores can be found on the penis, vagina, rectum (butt), or on the lips and mouth. Sometimes you may not even see or feel the sores since they are painless. For people who are pregnant or may become pregnant, it is possible to pass syphilis to your baby during pregnancy or childbirth. When a baby is born with syphilis it is called Congenital Syphilis*.

3. What are the symptoms of syphilis?

Often people don't notice symptoms, so they don't know they're infected. Signs of syphilis may include a sore near the area where the bacteria entered the body or a rash on one or more areas of the body. The symptoms can disappear and come back. The only way to know you have syphilis is to get tested.

4. When should I get tested for syphilis?

To get tested for syphilis, go to a doctor or health clinic. There are free or low cost, confidential testing sites available around Los Angeles County. Visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/dhsp/STDClincs or call the STD hotline (800) 758-0880 to find free or low cost testing and treatment.

If you are having sex without using a condom and/or have multiple sex partners, get tested every 6 months. If you are a man having sex with other men, get tested every 3-6 months. If you are a women and plan to get pregnant, get tested. If you're pregnant, remind your doctor to test you 3 times: during your first trimester (1-12 weeks), third trimester (28-32 weeks), and at delivery.

5. How is syphilis treated?

Syphilis can be treated and cured with antibiotics (medicine that kills bacteria). Make sure your sex partner(s) get tested and treated too. This will help them stay healthy and prevent them from spreading syphilis to others or you (again).

6. How can I prevent syphilis?

- Use a condom or dental dam every time you have sex.
- Limit your sex partners.
- Get tested regularly.
- If you are pregnant, seek early prenatal care to prevent health problems for you and your baby.

***For more information on Congenital Syphilis among babies, please see the "Congenital Syphilis FAQ".**



Key Points

- Syphilis is on the rise in Los Angeles County.
- Common symptoms of syphilis include a sore or rash, but many people don't notice symptoms.
- Get tested for syphilis.
- Syphilis is curable and preventable.

For more information:

**Los Angeles County
Department of Public
Health**

www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/dhsp/

**California Department of
Public Health**

www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CI/D/DCDC/Pages/Syphilis.aspx

**Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
(CDC)**

www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/stdfact-syphilis.htm