

What is Syphilis?

- Syphilis is a complex sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the bacterium. *Treponema Pallidum*.
- The bacterium is passed from person to person through direct contact with syphilis sore(s).
- Syphilis causes sores mainly on the external genitals, vagina, anus, or in the rectum.
- Untreated syphilis in a pregnant woman can infect and possibly cause death to the unborn child.

What are the signs and symptoms of Syphilis?

- The primary stage of syphilis is marked by the appearance of a single sore (called a chancre).
- The chancre is usually a firm, round, small, and painless lesion.
- It appears at the spot where the bacterium entered the body.
- The chancre lasts 1 to 5 weeks and will heal on its own.
- If inadequate or no treatment is administered, the infection progresses to the secondary stage.
- As the chancre disappears, a rash develops.
- The rash often appears as rough “copper penny” spots on both hand and feet.
- The rash may also appear as prickly heat rash, as small blotches or scales all over the body, as moist warts in the groin area or as pus-filled bumps like chicken pox.
- Other symptoms can include fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscles aches and fatigue.
- Late stage symptoms include poor muscle movements, paralysis, gradual blindness, dementia (mental illness).

How do you get tested Syphilis?

- A health care provider can detect the syphilis bacterium from infectious sores under a microscope.
- The body produces antibodies that can be detected with a blood test.

What is the treatment for Syphilis?

- One dose of penicillin will cure a person who has had syphilis for less than one year. More doses are needed to cure someone who has had it for longer than a year.
- A baby born with the disease needs daily penicillin treatment for 10 days.

- There are no home remedies or over-the-counter- drugs that cure syphilis.
- Penicillin will kill the syphilis bacterium and prevent further damage but it will not repair any damage already done.
- For testing and treatment for syphilis in the Philadelphia area, click here for a list of local family planning clinics. Outside of Philadelphia, please click here for a clinic near you www.plannedparenthood.org.

REMINDER: Using a condom consistently can help to protect you from STD's, including syphilis.