

# SYPHILIS

## What causes it?

Bacteria (treponema pallidum).

## How do I get it?

- sexual contact through oral, vaginal or anal sex
- contact with contaminated blood: shared needles from injection drug use, bloody saliva, or sharing tattooing instruments
- infected mother can pass syphilis to her fetus before birth

## What are the symptoms?

Within 10 days to 3 months of infection, you may not notice any symptoms or you may have symptoms of primary syphilis such as:

- painless sore(s) where the syphilis germs entered your body
- the sore can appear anywhere on the body where you were touched during sex, including your genitals, anus, tongue and throat
- the sore will last about a month and then go away
- some people may not go through this stage, or the sore may be so small they don't notice it

About 4 to 10 weeks after being infected, you may have symptoms of secondary syphilis such as:

- flu-like symptoms
- rash on palms of hands, soles of feet, or over whole body
- hair loss, aches, swollen glands or fever

Symptoms may go away on their own if not treated, but the infection may still be present: there may be no symptoms for several years after this phase.

## How do you test for it?

- blood test
- physical examination
- swab from genital sore, if present

## What treatment is available?

- syphilis is curable – an antibiotic can clear up the infection especially when it is treated early
- follow-up care is needed to monitor for possible damage

## What complications can happen?

If the infection is not treated, over time it can spread to affect the whole body. Several years (in some cases up to 20 years) after the initial infection, tertiary syphilis can lead to complications such as:

- lesions or ulcers on skin and bones that may cause arthritis
- heart disease, brain damage, dementia or paralysis
- permanent damage or death if untreated

## Where can I get tested?

You can get tested at:

- YCDC (Yukon Communicable Disease Control)  
#4 Hospital Road  
667-8323 or 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8323
- Community Health Centre
- [Medical Clinics](#)