

Protect Against Syphilis and Congenital Syphilis



Syphilis infections are **on the rise**.



Anyone who is sexually active can get syphilis, a treatable sexually transmitted infection (STI), and pregnant women with syphilis can pass it to their fetuses, which is known as congenital syphilis.

61.2%

Rates of syphilis increased by **61.2%** from 2019 to 2023.

2.1x

Babies born in 2023 were **2.1 times more likely** to be diagnosed with congenital syphilis than babies born in 2019 (based on a change from 50.3/100,000 live births to 105.8/100,000 live births).

90%

Overall, nearly **90%** of congenital syphilis cases could have been prevented with timely testing and treatment during pregnancy.

Syphilis can be prevented by engaging in safe sex, and it can be treated and cured with antibiotics.

Symptoms of syphilis—which include painless sores on the genitals, rectum, or mouth—can be hard to spot and easy to overlook. Some people may not have any symptoms.

Without treatment, syphilis can harm organs, including the brain, leading to severe lifelong issues or death. In pregnant women, syphilis can cause miscarriage, preterm birth, low birth weight, or stillbirth. Babies born with congenital syphilis face serious health problems, such as physical disabilities, vision loss, hearing loss, other permanent health conditions, and even death.

Follow guidance. Use these tips to prevent syphilis and congenital syphilis. Have an honest and open talk with your health care provider; they can help guide you on prevention and treatment options.

Use condoms correctly every time you have sex, whether it's vaginal, anal, or oral. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has guidance on condom usage available [here](#).

Be aware. Sores can develop in areas you cannot see easily, such as the vagina, anus, and rectum. You can get syphilis by touching a sore, and you can also spread it to others this way. You can give people syphilis when they come into contact with these sores.

Speak up. If you think you may have been exposed or reexposed to syphilis, tell your health care provider right away to ensure quick treatment.

Get tested. See a health care provider and get tested annually for STIs, including syphilis. Test again for STIs before you have sex with any new partners and if you develop symptoms.

Get tested during pregnancy.

All pregnant women should get tested for syphilis at their first prenatal visit. If you're not getting prenatal care, get tested as soon as you can. Get tested again around 28 weeks and once more before your baby is born.

Notify partners. Anyone who tests positive for syphilis should inform sexual partners from the past 12 months so they can get tested.

Get treated. To stop the spread of infection, anyone who tests positive for syphilis should get treated as soon as possible, and if you have syphilis, you should not have sexual contact with new partners until your syphilis sores completely heal. **Taking antibiotics as directed cures syphilis.** Treatment works 98% of the time. Get reevaluated and retested at both 6 and 12 months post-treatment to ensure effectiveness.

Treatment during pregnancy.

Congenital syphilis can be prevented if a pregnant woman with syphilis receives antibiotic treatment at least 30 days before delivery. All partners should also be treated. Pregnant women with syphilis, as well as their partners, should not have sex with anyone for 7 days after finishing treatment to allow the antibiotics time to clear their infections and prevent syphilis from infecting or reinfecting their fetuses.



Syphilis is a serious infection, but it can be prevented and treated.

Visit the [CDC webpage](#) on syphilis to learn more about prevention, infection, and treatment, including during pregnancy.



www.womenshealth.gov