

**Better
Health**

Let's
do this

IT
STARTS
WITH
ME

For more information visit:
nhs.uk/syphilis

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THE FACTS ABOUT

SYPHILIS.

The more people you have sex with, especially without condoms, the more chance you have of contracting infections like **syphilis**.

WHAT IS IT?

Syphilis is a bacterial infection that can be spread during anal, vaginal/ frontal or oral sex or when using sex toys. It can also be passed on during pregnancy to an unborn baby.

If untreated, syphilis can cause serious heart, brain and nerve problems years later and can even lead to death.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Around 10 days to three months after becoming infected, a painless sore (known as a 'chancre') may appear at the site of infection – usually on the penis or vagina/front hole, in the mouth or around the rectum.
- A few weeks after the sore disappears you may get a rash on your body, often on the palms of your hands or soles of your feet. You might feel ill, with a fever or headache.

Even if symptoms go away, without treatment someone can pass on syphilis for up to two years.

You can have it without knowing, so regular check-ups are a good idea.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

Using an external or internal condom cuts the risk. Using lube with condoms also helps avoid any small tears in the skin which increases the chances of infection.

If present, avoid touching the sores or the rash.

Get tested if you are starting a new relationship and/or you want to stop using condoms with your partner.

HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis pills (PrEP) and contraception such as the contraception pill offer no protection against sexually transmitted infections.

WHERE CAN I GET TESTED?

You can get tested for syphilis at your local sexual health centre or by using an online testing service if that is available in your area.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

Syphilis is easily treated with antibiotics – but don't have sex until the treatment has finished or you could pass on the infection.

Your clinic will ask you to return for another test to confirm the treatment has worked. If you are living with HIV the clinic should recommend syphilis testing at your regular HIV check-ups if you have had a new partner since your last test.

They should also talk to you about recent sexual partners so they can offer them a test for syphilis and treat them if needed.