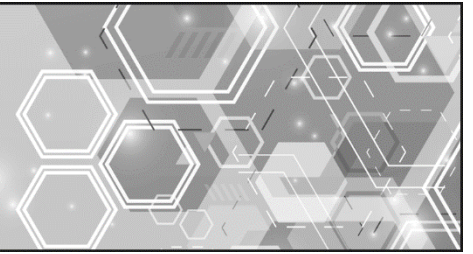




Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



Syphilis

What is it?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a bacteria called *Treponema pallidum*. Syphilis can cause sores on your genitals or in your mouth (called chancres). These sores are usually painless, but they can easily spread the infection to others. Syphilis is on the rise in Canada and can cause serious health effects if left untreated.

Syphilis is a reportable infection and must be reported to the Health Department.

How is it spread?

Syphilis is spread through vaginal, anal, and oral sex with an infected person. You can get it when your vagina, penis, anus or mouth touches someone's syphilis sores. A person infected with syphilis can pass the virus on to their baby during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding. Although less common, it can also be transmitted through sharing needles.

What do I look for?

A syphilis sore(s) called a chancre appears between 3 to 90 days after you get the infection. Chancres are usually firm, round, and painless, but can be open and wet. The sore(s) usually last about 3 to 6 weeks and then go away on their own. If untreated, syphilis will move through later stages of disease: secondary, latent, and tertiary. During the second stage, you may have a rash on your body, mild flu like symptoms, sore throat, swollen glands, headache, and muscle aches. These symptoms may last 2 to 6 weeks and then go away. This is the latent phase. Even though symptoms go away, you are still infected. The tertiary phase is many years after initial infection and when syphilis may cause serious damage to the body, affecting the brain, blood vessels, heart and bones. Not everyone will develop symptoms, which is why it is important to get tested.

How do you test for it?

Testing for syphilis is done by a blood test.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



How is it treated?

Syphilis is easily curable with antibiotics. The course of treatment depends on the stage of infection. It is very important to complete treatment exactly as prescribed.

How can I protect myself?

- Practice safe sex and always use a condom with lubricant when having oral, vaginal, or anal sex
- Get tested for sexually transmitted infections and encourage partners to get tested
- Tell your healthcare provider if you are breastfeeding, pregnant or plan on becoming pregnant

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