

# SYPHILIS



## WHAT IS SYPHILIS?



Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can cause serious damage to your body if it is not treated with medication. Many people with syphilis do not have any symptoms. Those who do have symptoms might notice a painless sore (usually on the genitals, mouth, or tongue), body rash, swollen lymph nodes, fever, or feel unwell. These symptoms will go away without treatment, but syphilis will still be in the body. People who are not treated for syphilis may have serious health problems in the future, such as blindness, paralysis, heart damage – even death.

## HOW CAN I GET SYPHILIS?

You can get syphilis by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with an infected person. Syphilis can also be passed from an infected pregnant woman to her unborn baby.



## CAN SYPHILIS BE CURED?

Yes, syphilis can be treated with medication. However, treatment doesn't cure any damage that has already been done to your body. Syphilis will not go away without medicine.

## HOW CAN I AVOID GETTING SYPHILIS?

You can reduce your risk of getting syphilis by using condoms and reducing your number of sexual partners. Free condoms are available at all health centres. It is also important to get tested for other STIs to make sure you are not passing them to someone else.

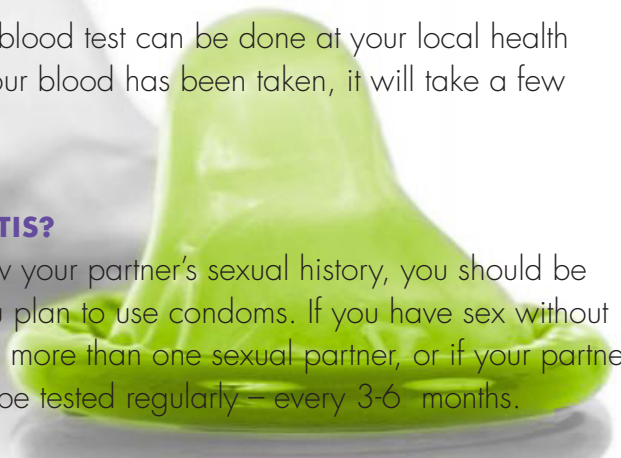
## HOW DO I GET TESTED FOR SYPHILIS?

A blood test can tell if you have syphilis. The blood test can be done at your local health centre (or at Public Health in Iqaluit). Once your blood has been taken, it will take a few days to get the results.



## HOW OFTEN SHOULD I BE TESTED FOR STIS?

If you are in a new relationship, or don't know your partner's sexual history, you should be tested before you start having sex, even if you plan to use condoms. If you have sex without condoms, have sex while drunk or high, have more than one sexual partner, or if your partner might have other sexual partners, you should be tested regularly – every 3-6 months.



Respect yourself, respect your body, respect your partner!

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## I HAVE SYPHILIS. WHAT NOW?

1. If your health care provider tells you that you have syphilis, they will give you shots (needles) with medication.
2. You will need to have more blood tests over the next year or possibly longer to make sure you are cured – ask your health care provider when you should come back.
3. Your health care provider will ask you who you have had sex with in the last three to 12 months. Your health care provider will not tell those people your name, but will ask them to get tested because they are a contact of someone who has syphilis. These sexual partners need to be tested and treated to stop the spread of syphilis.
4. If a health care provider tests you for syphilis in the future, you should tell them that you had syphilis.



## CAN I HAVE SEX WITH MY PARTNER AFTER I HAVE BEEN TREATED?

You and your partner should both be treated for syphilis. You should wait for at least two weeks after being treated before having sex with your partner or anyone else.



## DOES HAVING SYPHILIS ONCE MEAN I CAN'T GET IT AGAIN?

You can get syphilis again, even if you've already had it.

## I'M PREGNANT. HOW DOES SYPHILIS AFFECT MY BABY?

All pregnant women in Nunavut are tested two times for syphilis during pregnancy, and once when the baby is born. It is important to do this testing because untreated syphilis can cause very serious problems for your baby, including premature birth, stillbirth, and damage to the brain, eyes, ears, and heart.

# DON'T LET SEX MEAN SYPHILIS!



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