

# HEALTH TOPICS

## SYPHILIS

### Overview

- Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*.
- Syphilis is an STD that can cause long-term complications if not treated correctly.
- You can get syphilis by direct contact with a syphilis sore during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Sores can be found on the penis, vagina, anus, in the rectum, or on the lips and in the mouth.
- Symptoms in adults are divided into stages. These stages are primary, secondary, latent, and late syphilis. Many people who are infected with syphilis may not have symptoms but are still at risk for late complications if they are not treated.

### Signs & Symptoms

- **Primary stage:** The primary syphilis stage is typically marked with the appearance of a single or multiple sores, called chancres. Chancres are generally painless and can appear from 10 to 90 days after infection. They can last 3 to 6 weeks and heal without treatment.
- **Secondary stage:** The secondary stage consists of a non-itchy rash on one or more areas of the body. The rash can appear on the palms of your hands and soles of your feet, all over your body, or in just a few places on your body.
- **Latent stage:** The latent stage begins when all of the symptoms you had earlier disappear. If you do not receive treatment, you can continue to have syphilis in your body for years without any signs or symptoms.
- **Late:** Without treatment, syphilis can cause long term damage to internal organs, including the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones and joints. It can result in death.

### Prevention

- Abstinence
- Mutually monogamous sexual relationship or abstinence
- Consistently and correctly using condoms for all oral-genital, genital-genital and anal-genital contact. There could be chancres in areas not covered by a condom. Contact with these areas can result in the transmission of syphilis

### Treatment

- Syphilis is easy to cure in its early stages.
- A single intramuscular injection of penicillin, an antibiotic, will cure a person who has had syphilis for less than a year.

- Additional doses are needed to treat someone who has had syphilis for longer than a year.
- For people who are allergic to penicillin, other antibiotics are available to treat syphilis.

### How We Can Help

- You can have routine testing for syphilis as part of our “Self-directed STI Testing” program Monday-Friday until 3:30pm, no appointment is necessary. You can pick up the forms for Self-directed STI Testing on the information desk in the lobby and on the ledge across from the laboratory. Fill out the forms and present to the lab in Sierra Clinic (silver hallway). Your blood will be drawn and the results will be sent to you through our confidential & secure email system.
- If you have symptoms of syphilis, have been told you have been exposed to syphilis or would like to be seen by our medical staff, please contact our Appointment Desk. You can book an appointment [online](#) or by calling our Appointment Desk to [schedule an appointment](#).
- Also, our [Advice Nurse](#) service is free for all UCSB students to discuss health concerns and the options for medical care.
- Condoms are available for purchase at our Pharmacy, which is located in the lobby of UCSB Student Health Service.

### Recommended Resources

- **Syphilis - CDC Fact Sheet** (Centers for Disease Control Prevention - CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/default.htm>
- **Syphilis** (Mayo Clinic) <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/syphilis/basics/symptoms/con-20021862>
- **Syphilis** (WebMD) <http://www.webmd.com/sexual-conditions/guide/syphilis>