

Syphilis

A curable STD caused by *Treponema pallidum*, a bacteria called a spirochete

Signs and Symptoms

- “The great imitator”. You may not notice symptoms or may mistake symptoms for something else.
- A sore (chancre) on the genitals, mouth or rectum usually appears 1- 3 weeks after exposure, and can last up to 3 months.
- A skin rash, often on the trunk, palms and soles, but not always, commonly starts 5 - 12 weeks after infection.
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Heaped up wart like lesion in gluteal folds, perineum or perianal
- Neurosyphilis, which can occur at any stage of the disease
 - Ringing in the ears or hearing loss
 - Vision changes, including vision loss
 - Other neurologic signs/symptoms

Transmission

- Oral, anal or vaginal sex
- Infected mother to baby during birth

Prevention

- Use condoms/barriers consistently and correctly during oral, anal or vaginal sex.
- Maintain a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested for syphilis and is not infected.
- Get tested regularly and treated for STDs
- Get an infected partner treated
- Do not have sex with a partner who has syphilis until they complete treatment.

Visit our website:
for more info about STDs
www.kingcounty.gov/stdfacts
for info on getting tested and treated
www.kingcounty.gov/stdtesting

Treatment

- See a health care provider for exam and tests to figure out the best treatment.
- Treatment includes medicines prescribed by a health care provider and depends on the stage of infection.
- Neurosyphilis may require more intensive therapy.
- Get a follow-up exam to make sure the treatment has worked.

If Not Treated

- Can increase risk for getting HIV
- Damage major organs including the brain, heart and liver
- Damage blood vessels, bones, eyes and joints
- Paralysis, blindness, dementia or death
- Neurosyphilis:
 - Blindness - hearing loss - other irreversible condition
- During pregnancy:
 - Premature delivery, birth defects including deafness & blindness - if left untreated, can lead to miscarriage or death in the newborn

If You Have Syphilis

- Refrain from sex (oral, anal or vaginal sex) if there are symptoms.
- Seek medical care, including STD tests.
- Get tested for HIV.
- Do not have sex until you have completed treatment.
- Take all medicines prescribed, even if your symptoms are gone.
- Re-test in 1, 3, 6, 9 and 12 months.
- Make sure sex partners get treated.
- Get yearly STD screens if sexually active.