



Prevention

How can I prevent myself and my baby from getting syphilis?

- Don't have sex
- If you have sex, protect yourself.
 - You and your partner should get tested regularly.
 - Use condoms to help prevent spread.
- Go to your prenatal checkups. Even if you feel well, the routine testing for you and your baby can help us identify syphilis early and treat it before it affects you and your baby.
- If you are positive for syphilis, get treated! In pregnancy, it is best if you complete treatment at least 30 days before your baby is born.



Our Resources

Where can I go if my partners or I have syphilis?

Testing

- ✓ Private labs
- ✓ Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre lab: 484-2720
- ✓ The AIDS Secretariat (*free testing for syphilis and HIV with same-day results*): 462 5975

Treatment

- ✓ STI Clinic at the Browne's Avenue Health Centre: 562 3995 or 562-3076
- ✓ Private physicians

Information provided by

Elimination of Maternal to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis Subcommittee

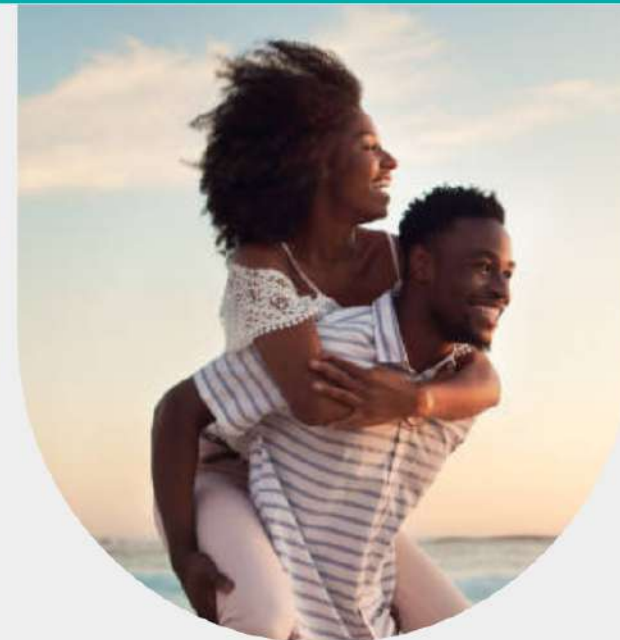
Maternal Child and Adolescent Health Committee



SIR LESTER BIRD MEDICAL CENTRE



MINISTRY of HEALTH
WELLNESS & THE ENVIRONMENT



WHAT
YOU SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT
SYPHILIS



Syphilis Basics

What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a bacterial infection that can affect the genitals, skin, heart, and brain. In babies, it can cause paralysis or stillbirth. Because of this, it is important to prevent syphilis and, where it cannot be prevented, to diagnose and treat it as early as possible.

What are the symptoms of syphilis?

Syphilis develops in stages. The symptoms vary with each stage. But the stages may overlap. And the symptoms don't always happen in the same order. You may be infected with syphilis bacteria without noticing any symptoms for years.

At any stage, untreated syphilis can affect the brain, spinal cord, eyes and other body parts. This can cause serious or life-threatening health problems.

Syphilis Transmission

How is syphilis transmitted?

Syphilis is primarily transmitted through sex and can be carried in blood as well. Importantly, moms who get syphilis while pregnant can pass it to their babies before or at birth, leading to many pregnancy complications.

Diagnosing Syphilis

How is syphilis diagnosed?

Syphilis can be diagnosed through:

- Blood samples taken and tested at labs
- Rapid tests

Testing for syphilis via rapid test is provided free of cost in the public system and the result is given during the visit. If the rapid test is positive, a blood test is also done to confirm the positive result.

Treatment and Care

How is syphilis treated?

Syphilis is treated with injections of penicillin. Depending on your history, you may need as many as three doses for initial treatment. After treatment, you will be retested to ensure that your infection has gone away. If it has not improved enough, you may need more doses of the medication.

Does my partner need treatment?

Yes! It is necessary that all of your partners get treated or tested for possible infection. If they do not, they may suffer complications of untreated infection or may pass it on to other partners. They may even cause you to be reinfected. Treating all possible partners is an essential part of stopping the spread of the disease.

Syphilis in Pregnancy

Every pregnant woman should be tested at least twice in pregnancy. We recommend testing as early as possible at the beginning of the pregnancy and again about a month before delivery.

If I get syphilis during pregnancy, what happens to my baby

After birth, the baby will get tested for syphilis and depending on the result, the paediatrician will determine whether he/she needs antibiotics. If your baby develops syphilis while you are pregnant, it is called congenital syphilis. Your baby may seem healthy at birth, but congenital syphilis may cause health complications later in life if he/she doesn't get treated right away.

If my baby has congenital syphilis, how is it treated?

Babies are admitted and given an antibiotic called penicillin, usually for 10 days.

For some babies, congenital syphilis can be completely cured. For others, they may need treatment for health conditions caused by the infection. Take your baby to all his/her medical checkups to make sure his/her treatment is working.

