

Syphilis & Pregnancy

What you need to know



Did you know?

- Syphilis can cause serious health problems for you and your baby.
- There has been a big increase in the number of babies born with syphilis in the United States and in Montana.
- The good news is that you can protect your baby by avoiding infection, getting tested for syphilis during pregnancy, and taking treatment as directed if you test positive.

What can happen to my baby?

- Untreated syphilis can cause miscarriage (losing the baby during pregnancy), prematurity (a baby born early), low birth weight, or death shortly after birth.
- Babies born with syphilis can also have deformed bones, low blood count, enlarged organs, blindness or deafness, and other health problems.

How do I know if I have syphilis?

- You can have syphilis and you may not know it. Many people do not have symptoms.
- Syphilis symptoms may be very mild and similar to other health conditions.
- Testing is the only way to be sure if syphilis infection is present.

How can I get help?



If you need help getting to a clinic for testing or treatment, please contact your local public health department and talk to your doctor.



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I am pregnant, what do I need to know?

- Get tested for syphilis at your first prenatal visit.
- If you are pregnant and have syphilis, you can give the infection to your unborn baby.
- Undetected syphilis infection during pregnancy can cause your baby to be born too early, can cause birth defects, or cause your baby to be stillborn.
- If you are concerned about syphilis infection from a new partner or reinfection during pregnancy, contact your doctor about testing.
- If you test positive for syphilis in pregnancy, it is very important to complete the recommended treatment for your baby's health.

What can I do?

- Get tested for syphilis the first time you see your doctor for health care during pregnancy.
- If you don't get tested at your first visit, ask your doctor about getting tested during your next checkup.

What if I test positive?

- If you test positive for syphilis, get treatment and protect yourself and others.
- If you are treated, but your partner isn't, you risk getting syphilis again.
- If you test positive, it is crucial that your sexual partner(s) get tested and treated to avoid getting infected again.

How can I protect myself from syphilis?

- You can reduce your risk of getting syphilis by avoiding unprotected sex (sex without a condom).
- Some ways to protect yourself include only having sex with a person who has been tested for syphilis and other STIs and by using latex condoms the right way every time you have sex.