

Syphilis

The number of American Indians with syphilis has been rising in Minnesota. What do you know about this serious disease?



8 things you need to know

1. Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD).
2. Anyone can get syphilis through sexual contact (vaginal, oral, or anal).
3. You can have syphilis and pass it on to others, even if you don't notice any symptoms.
4. It can be cured with prescribed antibiotics. One shot may be all it takes early in the infection.
6. Syphilis can be passed from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby.
5. Untreated syphilis can lead to blindness, organ damage, and death.
7. Being treated for syphilis once does not protect against future infections with syphilis.
8. If you are pregnant, considering pregnancy, or you are concerned about STDs, you need to get tested.

How can you lower your risk?

Not having sex, or having sex only with someone who's not infected and who has sex only with you, are the best ways to avoid syphilis. Condoms can *reduce* your risk if used exactly right *every* time. But a condom protects only the area it covers. Sores in other areas, that may be hidden, can transmit the infection.

Who should be tested?

You should be tested for syphilis **NOW** if:

You have any symptoms, such as a painless, round sore on your genitals or in your mouth.

Your partner has syphilis or symptoms that might be syphilis, even if you don't have symptoms.

Every pregnant woman should be tested for syphilis. Tell your doctor if you plan to become pregnant.

Why is pregnancy a special concern?

Syphilis causes severe birth defects or death in babies. If you are pregnant, you can pass syphilis on to your baby even if you don't know you are infected.

Where to get tested

Indian Health Board of Minneapolis
612-721-9800; indianhealthboard.com

Native American Community Clinic
612-872-8086; nacc-healthcare.org

Planned Parenthood
1-800-230-PLAN
plannedparenthood.org/health-center

Red Door Services
612-260-7843; reddoorclinic.org

Or call the **Minnesota Family Planning & STD Hotline, 1-800-78-FACTS**, for testing sites in your area.

Additional information is available from the Centers for Disease Control, cdc.gov/std/syphilis or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

PRIMARY STAGE



Symptom: Chancere

Painless, round, red sore that can appear anywhere you've had sexual contact.

The sores last 3–6 weeks.

Untreated disease moves to next stage.

SECONDARY STAGE



Symptoms: Rash, sometimes illness

Dark rash on your hands and feet or on other parts of your body—usually does not itch. Sometimes fever, sore throat, muscle aches, headaches and fatigue.

Untreated disease moves to next stage.

LATENT STAGE

Symptoms: None

The disease is in your body and can be found by testing but has no symptoms. The latent stage can last for years.

TERTIARY STAGE

Symptoms are severe, disabling

Symptoms may include difficulty moving your arms and legs, paralysis, numbness, blindness, and heart disease.

Late stage syphilis can lead to death.

CONGENITAL SYPHILIS



Results in birth defects or death

Nearly half of babies infected with syphilis in the womb die. Others have severe facial and other deformities.

Developed as a part of the Ninde Collaborative's work to improve the health of the American Indian community in Minneapolis.

Adapted from: CDC Syphilis brochure <http://www.cdc.gov/STD/Syphilis/the-facts/the-facts.txt>

