

# Syphilis

## Am I at Risk?

You are at risk for syphilis and other STDs if:

- you have had unprotected oral, anal, or vaginal sex
- you have had multiple sex partners

If you think you may be at risk contact your doctor, a family planning clinic, or your local public health department for testing.

If you have syphilis or any other STD, the Wyoming Department of Health and Center for Disease Control recommend you get tested for HIV.

**The only way to know your STD status for sure is to GET TESTED!**

**For FREE Testing Vouchers, to find a clinic near you, or for more information on STDs visit our website.**

[www.knowyo.org](http://www.knowyo.org)

**knowyo.org**

**Wyoming Department of Health  
Communicable  
Diseases**

6101 Yellowstone Road  
Suite 510  
Cheyenne, WY 82002

Phone: 307-777-8939



## What is Syphilis?

Syphilis is a curable sexually transmitted disease caused by the bacteria *Treponema pallidum*. Syphilis is transmitted through unprotected oral, anal, or vaginal sex and by skin to skin contact.

## Statistics

- In 2010 there were more than 45,000 cases of reported syphilis in the US
- Syphilis rates are low in Wyoming
- Syphilis is most prevalent in individuals 20-39 years old

## Symptoms

Syphilis has several stages of infection which each produce specific symptoms.

Primary	Secondary	Late/Latent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A chancre (small, painless sore) will develop at the site of infection</li><li>• This sore can appear ANYWHERE on the body that came into contact with syphilis (may not be noticed in the vagina or throat)!</li><li>• The sore heals on its own within 3-6 weeks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A skin rash may appear on one or more areas of the body</li><li>• The rash may appear to be rough and red-to-brown colored</li><li>• The rash will not itch and will heal within 3-6 weeks</li><li>• Fever, headache, fatigue, weight loss and/or swollen glands might accompany the rash</li><li>• Other secondary symptoms may include mucous patches, alopecia</li><li>• Secondary symptoms will usually go away on their own.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The #1 symptom of Late or Latent syphilis is NO SYMPTOM!</li><li>• This stage can last for years if you are not treated</li><li>• Syphilis can cause damage to the brain, heart, nerves, eyes, blood vessels, liver, bones and joints</li><li>• Difficulty with muscle movement, paralysis, dementia, numbness, blindness and death can occur</li></ul>

## Complications

If left untreated syphilis can cause major organ system damage such as paralysis, dementia, blindness and even death.

## Testing

If you believe you may have been exposed or are showing symptoms, get tested. A chancre can be swabbed for testing. If a chancre is not present, blood tests are used.

## Treatment

If detected early, syphilis can be treated with antibiotics. After treatment, you must abstain from sex until completely healed. It is VERY important that you notify your sex partners of your infection.

## Prevention

There are many options available for preventing syphilis infection:

- Abstain from all sexual activity
- Use condoms consistently and correctly
- Use dental dams for oral sex
- Maintain a long-term monogamous relationship
- Avoid sexual contact with an infected individual or someone who has open sores on their genitals, mouth, or anus
- If you believe you may have been exposed, GET TESTED!