



## SYPHILIS

### What is syphilis?

An infection spread by having sex with an infected partner.

### What are the symptoms of syphilis?

- Many people may not have any symptoms.
- A sore can develop three to four weeks after you have sex with someone who is infected with syphilis. The sore may appear on any part of your body that has been in contact with the sexual fluids of an infected person.
- Sometimes, the sore will not be noticed. In both men and women, the sore will go away on its own within a month but the disease will continue to spread.
- About six weeks after being infected, a rash may develop. It may look like other rashes, such as measles. It can appear anywhere on the body, but is most often found on the belly, the genitals, palms of the hands and soles of the feet. Again, you may not notice the rash, but the disease will continue to spread.
- **You can have syphilis and not know it!** The only way to know for sure is to have a medical exam, including tests done on the sore(s) and a blood test.

### What happens if syphilis is left untreated?

Untreated syphilis can spread and cause damage to your brain, heart and other organs in the body. Severe cases of the disease can cause death. Pregnant women can pass it to an unborn child with severe consequences.

### Can syphilis be treated?

Syphilis is treated with injections of antibiotics. Afterwards you must have blood tests to make sure the treatment has worked.

**Important:** Do not have sex until two weeks after you and your partner(s) have finished the treatment.

### How can syphilis be prevented?

You can avoid getting syphilis by:

- having sex with only one partner who is not infected and who is having sex only with you;
- using condoms. Condoms offer protection against STIs but they must be used properly;
- having regular STI check-ups;
- deciding not to have sex.

If you have different sexual partners, or if your partner has different partners, you should also be tested for gonorrhoea, chlamydia, genital warts, genital herpes, and HIV (the virus linked to AIDS), and you should consider getting shots to prevent hepatitis B.

Please remember! The more sexual partners you have, the higher your risk of getting an STI.

For additional information, contact your local Public Health office or your family doctor.