



## Syphilis



### Overview

This is a sexually transmitted disease. It's a serious problem for men and women. But it can be cured with medication.

### Causes

Syphilis is a bacterial infection. It spreads by contact with a syphilis sore on or around the penis, vagina, mouth or anus of an infected person. You get it during vaginal, anal or oral sex. And, a mother can spread it to her baby during childbirth.

### Symptoms

Syphilis progresses in stages, beginning with one or more sores where it entered your body. A syphilis sore is usually firm, round and painless. If it's hidden in the vagina or rectum, you may not know you have it. If you aren't treated, the infection enters the next stage as your sore heals. You may get a skin rash, sores in your mouth, vagina or anus, swollen lymph nodes and a fever. These symptoms can be very mild. Then, the infection enters a dormant period. You may have no symptoms for many years. Some people then enter a fourth stage, called "tertiary syphilis." In this stage, the infection can affect the brain, nervous system and multiple organs in your body.

### Complications

Untreated syphilis can cause severe headaches. It can cause numbness, problems with coordination, and paralysis. It can cause dementia. It can also cause problems with vision, including blindness. It can be fatal.

### Prevention and Treatment

You can prevent syphilis by not having vaginal, anal or oral sex. If you do have sex, lower your risk by being in a long term relationship with an uninfected partner. And stay faithful to each other. Men should always use latex condoms. If you are infected, it can be treated with antibiotics. The medicine cures the infection, but you can be re-infected in the future.

Actor portrayals in photos

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