

Types of Syphilis Tests

Syphilis testing is done through blood testing. There are rapid tests and blood draw tests.

- Rapid tests have a window period of 3 months that it can detect any antibodies.
- Rapid tests cannot be done if someone has ever tested positive in the past or been treated as it may always come back reactive even if there is no active infection.
- A blood draw test can detect an active infection, or even a past infection.
- A blood draw will also check for titers which are a unit of measure for syphilis infection.
- Blood draw tests are also done to confirm someone's treatment worked.

Disclosing to Partners

Telling a partner can be hard, but keep in mind that most people with an STI don't know they have it. Syphilis can be detrimental to someone's health so it's important to disclose to partners so they can get treatment as soon as possible. It is possible to pass syphilis back and forth, so if someone gets treated they should wait until their partner is also cleared before resuming sex.

tellyourpartner.org

Is also a great site that allows you to send an anonymous text message to your partner(s).

If Someone Has Fallen out of Care/ Additional Testing Sites

**Colorado Health Network
(Medicaid/Insurance)**

303-962-5317

**Denver Health Sexual Health Clinic
(insured/uninsured)**

303-602-3540

**Planned Parenthood
(insured/medicaid/uninsured)**

303-832-5069

Your Primary Care Provider

Information Provided by:

<https://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/stdfact-syphilis.htm>

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Syphilis Guide

**HeyDenver.org
303-962-2880**

What is Syphilis

- Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection that can cause serious health problems and complications or even death if left untreated.
- It is an infection caused by the *Treponema Pallidum* bacteria.
- Syphilis develops in stages and symptoms vary at every stage.
- It is very treatable.

How Syphilis is Transmitted

- Syphilis can be passed on when infected lesions/sore/chancre come in contact with the soft skin of the mucous membrane found inside the vagina, urethra, or rectum
- It is most easily spread during the first (primary) stage because symptoms usually go unnoticed.
- Syphilis can also be contracted from exposure to lesions or syphilitic sore during the secondary stage. If sores are present, they may easily spread the syphilis bacteria.
- Syphilis bacteria are extremely fragile, they cannot be spread during contact with objects such as toilet seats, towels, pools or sharing utensils or clothes.
- Syphilis can be transmitted during pregnancy or during childbirth from parent to infant.

Reducing Possible Transmission

Safer sex practices like condom use, routine testing, and talking to partners about their testing habits may help reduce possible transmission.

Symptoms and Stages

Symptoms can include:

- Chancres in mouth or genitals
- Rash often on hands/feet/torso
- Mild fever
- Fatigue
- Sore Throat
- Hair loss
- Swollen Glands
- Headache
- Muscle Pain
- Blindness
- Damage to nerves, brain and heart
- Swollen Lymph Nodes
- Dementia
- Death
- The primary stage of syphilis is usually marked by the appearance of a single sore, known as a chancre, within 10 to 90 days after contact with the bacteria at the site of infection. The sore can last from three to six weeks. The chancre will go away with or without treatment. Without treatment, the person will still have syphilis and can transmit it to others.
- The secondary stage of syphilis can develop 17 days to 6 1/2 months after infection. Symptoms can last from 2 to 6 weeks. Symptoms can include: a rough, reddish-brown rash. Symptoms of secondary syphilis will clear up with or without treatment, but the disease will still be present if untreated. It will then enter into a latent stage, which has no signs or symptoms.

- Latent syphilis develops from two to 30+ years after infection. Because there are no signs or symptoms, the only way to test for infection during the latent period is by blood test.
- Symptoms of late stage or tertiary syphilis can occur 2 to 30+ years after infection. Complications during this stage can include: gummas, problems with heart and blood vessels, or chronic nervous system disorders, such as blindness, insanity, paralysis & death. Latent syphilis develops from two to 30+ years after infection.

Treatment

- Penicillin is used to treat syphilis. Even if someone has a true penicillin allergy.
- Most providers will provide a neuro syphilis exam to see if there are any other effects from the infection.
- It is recommended to refrain from sex until after treatment is confirmed to have worked or until the person is no longer symptomatic.
- Treatment can stop the infection from worsening symptoms but it cannot reverse any damage done by syphilis.