



Rapid Syphilis Testing Fact Sheet

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SYPHILIS

What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that can cause long-term complications, including permanent blindness, if not treated.

How can I get syphilis?

Syphilis is spread by direct contact with a syphilitic sore, known as a chancre, during oral, anal or vaginal sex. Pregnant women with the disease can also give it to their unborn child.

What are symptoms of syphilis?

- The average time between infection with syphilis and the start of the first symptoms is 21 days, but can range from 10 to 90 days.
- After becoming infected with syphilis, some people develop a painless sore in the genital or oral area that can look like an ingrown hair, zipper cut or harmless bump. Later, a non-itchy rash can show up on the palms of your hands, soles of your feet, all over your body, or just in a few places.
- Infections of the eye and of the central nervous system can also develop.

However, some people infected with syphilis never notice any symptoms.

Should I be tested for syphilis?

If you fall into any of the following categories, you should consider being tested for syphilis:

- Men who have sex with men
- Persons that have had condomless sex with new partners or in an open relationship
- Pregnant women

- Persons taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV Prevention, if they have not been using condoms.
- HIV-positive individuals
- Anyone with a partner who has tested positive for syphilis, regardless of symptoms

How will my provider know if I have syphilis?

- A blood test specific for syphilis must be performed and the results usually take a week to come back. However, there is a new rapid syphilis test that can be performed today.

What is the rapid syphilis test and how rapid is it?

- The Syphilis Health Check is a new rapid syphilis test that uses blood from a finger stick and gives results in 10 minutes!

What if my rapid syphilis test is positive?

- You MAY have syphilis. All rapid syphilis tests must be confirmed with another test to determine if someone is currently infected since people with a past infection will likely have a positive test. Additional testing will need to be done by your provider.
- If syphilis is confirmed, it can be cured with antibiotics prescribed by a health care provider.
- The sooner syphilis infection is caught, the less chance it has to cause serious and permanent damage to your body.

If I have syphilis, what does that mean for my partner(s)?

- All partners in the past 90 days should be tested and treated since they may also be infected
- Avoid having sex until you and your partner(s) have been treated, so you don't re-infect each other.

What if the rapid syphilis test is negative?

- You MAY NOT be infected with syphilis, however right after exposure, tests can be negative even if someone has been infected.
- Ask your provider if and when you should be tested again.