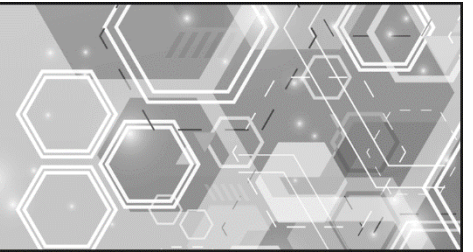




## Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



# Syphilis

## What is it?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection caused by a type of bacteria. Syphilis can cause painless sores on the genitals or mouth and can easily spread to others. Syphilis is on the rise in Canada and can cause serious health problems if not treated.

**Syphilis is a reportable infection and must be reported to the Health Department.**

## How is it spread?

Syphilis is spread through direct contact with a syphilis sore during vaginal, anal, and oral sex. Even if there are no symptoms syphilis can be transmitted to sexual partners. A person infected with syphilis can pass the virus to their baby during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding. Although less common, it can also be transmitted through sharing needles.

## What do I look for?

Most people who have syphilis have no symptoms. A syphilis sore(s) can start 3 to 90 days after getting infected. The sore(s) usually last 3 to 6 weeks and then go away on their own. If not treated, syphilis will move through later stages of disease: secondary, latent, and tertiary.

Symptoms during the second stage may be a rash, mild flu-like symptoms, sore throat, swollen glands, headache, and muscle aches. These symptoms usually last 2 to 6 weeks and then go away. Even though symptoms go away, the infection is still present.

Latent syphilis is when all symptoms have gone away, and the infection has been in the body for longer than 1 year. The tertiary phase is many years after the infection and may cause serious damage to the body, affecting the brain, blood vessels, heart and bones.

## How do you test for it?

Testing for syphilis is done by a blood test.

... over

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | [durham.ca/health](https://durham.ca/health)

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



## How is it treated?

Syphilis is easily curable with antibiotics. How long you need treatment depends on the stage of infection. It is important to complete treatment exactly as prescribed by your health care provider.

## How can I protect myself?

- Practice safe sex and always use a condom with lubricant when having oral, vaginal, or anal sex.
- Get tested for sexually transmitted infections and encourage partners to get tested.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you are breastfeeding, pregnant or plan on becoming pregnant.

March 7, 2025

905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | [durham.ca/health](https://durham.ca/health)

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

