

Syphilis: After Pregnancy

What you can do to decrease risks for you and your future pregnancies



Things to do **EVERY DAY** for healthy women and babies:

Exercise – 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week

Vitamin – 400 micrograms (mcg) of Folic Acid per day

Educate yourself about medicines and chemicals that can cause birth defects

Reproductive life planning – set your personal goals for birth control and future children

Yearly doctor visits to discuss physical and mental wellness

Diet – Vegetables, fruits, and whole grains daily

Avoid tobacco, drugs, and alcohol

Your partner, friends, and family should be sources of support

Content from everywomancalifornia.org with permission from the Preconception Health Council of California.



What is syphilis and how do you know if you have it?

Syphilis is a bacterial infection usually spread through sex. Syphilis can also be passed to your baby during pregnancy or birth. People can have syphilis and not know they have it. Syphilis is a disease that occurs in three stages:

- **Primary stage:** The first symptom (1 week after exposure) is a painless red sore on the genitals, mouth, or rectal area. You may not see it or feel it, and it goes away on its own.
- **Secondary stage:** Later symptoms (a few weeks or months after exposure) include fever, rash, and flu-like symptoms. These symptoms can go away, but the disease stays in your body.
- **Tertiary stage:** If untreated for many years, syphilis will cause long-term heart and brain problems, and even death.

What can you do if you have syphilis?

If you have been diagnosed with syphilis, it is important to:

- **Get treated** – usually syphilis can be cured with one dose of antibiotics. Most of the medications used to treat syphilis are safe during breastfeeding.
- **Ask your partner** to get treated so you don't pass it back and forth.
- **Get your blood tested** to make sure you are cured. Remember that you may always test positive on certain tests for syphilis.
- **Get tested** for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- **Practice safe sex** by always using a condom.

How can you stay safe from syphilis and other STIs?

Follow all of your health care provider's recommendations for getting treated and retested for syphilis. Don't get pregnant again until you are sure your syphilis has been treated and cured. Women who get syphilis during pregnancy are likely to infect the baby. Babies born with syphilis may be born prematurely, may not be able to grow properly, and may have liver problems, lung infections, or a skin rash.

Talk to your partner about syphilis and other STIs. Don't have sex with your partner until both of you have been treated and retested for syphilis. Always use condoms with water-based lubricants. Oil-based lubricants will weaken condoms. Remember that a condom may not completely cover a sore, and contact with a sore can lead to infection, so if you or your partner have a sore, think about not having sex.

Remember your ABCs:

folic  cid  reastfeeding  ontraception

For more information, go to:

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists:
acog.org/publications/faq/faq071.cfm

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/std

Every Woman California: everywomancalifornia.org

March of Dimes: marchofdimes.com/complications_syphilis.html