

# Congenital Syphilis (Mother-to-Child Syphilis)



## 1. What is congenital syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by bacteria (germs). Syphilis is easy to cure. Without treatment, it can hurt your body's organs. Congenital syphilis is when a pregnant woman passes syphilis to her baby during pregnancy or childbirth. It can cause women to have their baby too early or cause a miscarriage or stillbirth (a baby born dead.) It can also lead to serious birth defects in babies.

## 2. How is this disease spread?

You can get syphilis by having contact with a syphilis sore during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Sores can be found on the penis, vagina, anus, or on the lips and mouth. You may not see the sores and they don't cause pain. Congenital syphilis spreads from mother to baby during pregnancy or birth.

## 3. What are the symptoms of this disease?

Often people don't notice symptoms, so they don't know they're infected. Signs of syphilis may include a sore near the area where the germ entered the body (vagina, anus, lips, or mouth) or rash on one or more areas of the body. The only way to know for sure is to get tested. A syphilis test is part of prenatal care (medical care during pregnancy).

## 4. How should I get tested?

Prenatal care is very important to keep you and your baby healthy. You should be tested for syphilis 3 times during your pregnancy: during the 1<sup>st</sup> trimester, early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester (between 28-32 weeks) and at delivery.

## 5. How is this disease treated?

Syphilis can be treated and cured, even during pregnancy, with a shot of antibiotics (medicine that kills germs). Make sure your sex partner(s) get tested and treated too. This will help them stay healthy, avoid infecting others, and avoid re-infecting you.

## 6. How can I prevent this disease?

- Use condoms.
- Go to your prenatal visits for testing and treatment as early as possible. If you don't have a regular doctor, call the free STD hotline **(800) 758-0880** to find out where to get tested and treated for free.

### Key Points:

- Congenital syphilis is when a pregnant woman passes syphilis to her baby during pregnancy or childbirth.
- Common symptoms of syphilis include a sore or rash, but many people don't see signs.
- Syphilis is treated and cured with antibiotics.
- Prenatal care is very important to find and treat syphilis.

### For more information:

#### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/pregnancy/stdfact-pregnancy.htm>

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

#### U.S. Office of Women's Health

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/syphilis.html>

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