

Learn the facts. Protect yourself. Get tested.

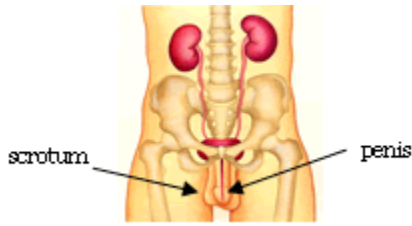
## Syphilis (SIF-ih-liss)

sometimes called "pox" or "bad blood"

### What is syphilis?

It's caused by **bacteria** that can infect:

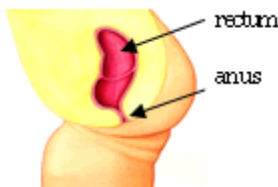
- the penis and scrotum



- the vagina, vulva or cervix



- the anus or rectum



- or the mouth.



### You may have:

- small sores, blisters, or bumps on your mouth, anus, vagina, penis, or testicles (balls)
- a rash on your hands, feet, or over your whole body
- hair loss
- headaches
- muscle pain or a tired feeling
- a fever or swollen glands

Even though your symptoms may go away with time, the bacteria is still there so you still need to see your health care provider to get rid of the disease.

### What is the test like?

A doctor or nurse will take a sample of your blood



or they may wipe the area with a small swab.



### How is syphilis treated?

It can be **cured** with medicine called **antibiotics** that you get from your health care provider.



Be sure your partner(s) sees a health care provider and get treated at the same time so that you don't pass the infection back and forth. You should also be sure to follow your health care provider's advice and take all of the medicine you are given even if you start to feel better.

### What can you do to protect yourself?

- You can choose not to have sex
- You can reduce your number of partners if you choose to have sex
- You can use condoms when you have sex
- You can talk with your partner(s) about STDs
- You can talk with your health care provider and get tested

### How do you get syphilis?

It is spread through skin-to-skin contact **between an infected person's sore and your penis, vagina, anus or mouth**. It can also be passed from mother to baby during pregnancy.

You can't get it from:

- hugging
- shaking hands
- sharing food or using the same dish
- sitting on public toilets

### How do you know you have it?

**Many people don't know they have it. They may not have symptoms or may think the sores are something else.**

**To find out more about STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) or for information about where you can go to get tested, call (617) 983-6940 or visit [www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/std](http://www.mass.gov/dph/cdc/std)**