

Patient Information for Secondary syphilis in Child/Adult

Overview

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*. Secondary syphilis is the second of four stages of syphilis infection and it occurs typically 1-3 months after the first stage of syphilis. All patients who contract syphilis will go on to develop secondary syphilis if the infection is not treated.

Who's At Risk

You can get syphilis by having unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), secondary syphilis rates have increased since 2005 among men and men who have sex with men. An increase in syphilis cases has been reported in the United States in black and Hispanic individuals, sex workers, individuals who expose themselves to sex workers, and individuals with a medical history of other STIs.

Signs & Symptoms

Secondary syphilis typically includes skin rashes and sores in your mouth, anus, penis, or vagina. The rash often appears as red or brown, rough-looking spots on the palms or bottoms of feet. Other symptoms can include fever, sore throat, headaches, weight loss, fatigue, muscle aches, and hair loss.

Self-Care Guidelines

To reduce your chances of contracting syphilis, use a condom when having sex. Also, consult your partner(s) prior to having sex about their risk of infection.

When to Seek Medical Care

Seek medical care if you experience any of the symptoms of syphilis. You should be tested for syphilis routinely if you are a man who has sex with men, are pregnant, have HIV, or have a partner infected with syphilis.

Even if symptoms subside, without treatment, secondary syphilis can turn into tertiary syphilis, which can involve the brain and the heart with very serious side effects.

Treatments Your Physician May Prescribe

Syphilis must be treated with penicillin. If you are allergic to penicillin, you will need to be desensitized to it. You should also be tested for HIV infection. Syphilis can be completely cured, but only with treatment.