

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



SEXUAL HEALTH PROJECT

Yorkshire MESMAC

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Syphilis

This resource is for Gay men, Bisexual men and men who have sex with men. It aims to provide you with information about Syphilis – its symptoms, treatment and prevention during sex between men.

Syphilis is a bacterial infection which can be passed on through sexual contact.

How is Syphilis passed on?

Syphilis can be passed on through sucking, rimming, fingering and fucking without condoms. It can also be passed on through contact with a Syphilis sore or rash.

What are the symptoms of Syphilis?

You may not know if you or your sexual partner(s) have Syphilis as there are often no symptoms. There are 3 stages of infection with Syphilis which are:

Stage 1: A small painless sore on your: cock, balls, lips, mouth, throat or arse which heals on its own. The sore can last 3 – 6 weeks and usually appears 10 – 90 days after infection.

Stage 2: A rash on any part of your body that does not itch, the rash looks different on different people and can look like a rash caused by allergies etc. Some people also get fevers, muscle aches, feel sick and loose weight or hair. The rash may disappear on its own if left untreated.

During Stage 1 and 2 Syphilis is highly infectious.

Stage 3: No symptoms. However Syphilis is still in the body and can cause damage to your eyes, liver, bones, heart, brain and nervous system. In extreme cases the damage caused by Syphilis can lead to death.

How is Syphilis prevented?

Using a condom and plenty of water based lube for anal sex can greatly reduce the risk. Research suggests that oral sex is one of the main ways Syphilis is being passed on so you may want to think about using a condom or dental dam for rimming or sucking.

It is important to remember that Syphilis sores and rashes can be in areas which are not covered by condoms so there is no complete protection.

How is Syphilis treated?

If you have Syphilis you will be treated with a course of antibiotics, usually given by injection. If you have a phobia to needles or have an allergy to antibiotics discuss the alternatives with the person who is treating you.

Syphilis for people living with HIV

People living with HIV are not always routinely tested for Syphilis or other Sexually Transmitted Infections at every GUM (sexual health) clinic. If you are living with HIV and are concerned about Syphilis or any other STI ask your consultant or health advisor for advice.

Because of the damage caused by Syphilis your viral load may increase. It is also possible that HIV may speed up the progress of Syphilis.