

MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN



FACTS ABOUT SYPHILIS

Syphilis continues to rise among men who have sex with men in Australia. Learn more about syphilis and how to protect yourself.

WHAT IS SYPHILIS?

Syphilis is a sexually transmissible infection (STI) which is passed from one person to another during sexual activity. It can cause serious health issues if left untreated.

YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW YOU HAVE SYPHILIS

Not everyone who has syphilis has symptoms, so people often don't realise they have it. For those who do get symptoms, the first sign is one or more sores or ulcers at the site of the infection (e.g. genitals, anus and mouth). Over time syphilis may develop into rashes, skin lesions, swollen lymph nodes, hair loss, muscle and joint aches, headaches and fatigue.

Without treatment, syphilis can cause brain infections, dementia, lung and heart failure, blindness and death.

GETTING A REGULAR TEST CAN HELP YOU

Even if you or your sexual partner don't have symptoms, sexual health tests are important. Getting tested regularly for STIs like syphilis will make sure you can receive treatment early and help prevent you passing the infection on.

Remember, everyone has the right to safe and supportive sexual health care. See your local doctor to assess your risk of contracting syphilis and get tested.

PRACTISING SAFE SEX

The best way to prevent syphilis is to practise safe sex:

- Always use condoms with water-based lubricant during anal sex.
- Always use condoms or dental dams during oral sex.
- Avoid sexual activity if you or your sexual partner is unwell, especially if they have symptoms of syphilis. This includes rashes, skin lesions, swollen lymph nodes, hair loss, muscle and joint aches, headaches and fatigue.
- Get tested regularly.

If you have syphilis, you should avoid sex or close sexual contact with another person until you have finished your treatment. If you have sex during treatment, you could catch syphilis again or pass it on to your sexual partner.



For more information about syphilis go to health.gov.au/syphilis



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Department of Health