

# Syphilis on the Rise

## *Why are we concerned about syphilis?*

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that affects both men and women. The percent of reported syphilis cases in Virginia increased by 655% between 2003 and 2019. If left untreated, syphilis can damage your organs and may even cause death.

Pregnant people with syphilis may have premature labor, babies with birth defects, or a stillborn baby.



## *Who is at risk for syphilis?*

Men have far higher rates of syphilis than women, especially men who have sex with men. Anyone who has been sexually active may get syphilis if they have had unprotected sexual contact with an infected person. It may also spread from an infected mother to her baby. The current drug epidemic- opioids & methamphetamines - is associated with an increased risk of acquiring syphilis.

## *How do I know if I have syphilis?*

Syphilis is often hard to diagnose because it has symptoms which may look like other diseases. A simple blood test is the best way to tell if you've been infected. Your local health department offers this testing for free.

## *Can syphilis be cured?*

YES! Syphilis can be cured with the right antibiotics from your health care provider. However, treatment will not undo any damage the infection has already caused.

**For more information:** Contact your healthcare provider, local health department, or visit [www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis](http://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis).



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