

Congenital Syphilis is on the Rise

What Is Congenital Syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Congenital syphilis occurs when syphilis is transmitted from mother to infant during pregnancy and/or at delivery.

Congenital syphilis can cause serious health problems for the baby like premature birth, birth defects, miscarriage, or stillbirth. Not all babies born with congenital syphilis will show symptoms at birth.

There is treatment for babies with congenital syphilis but they need to be treated **right away** or they could develop serious health problems, even months or years later. It is also important that babies get the proper follow-up care based on medical advice.

How Common Is Congenital Syphilis?

In the United States, congenital syphilis has been on the rise since 2012. In 2018, the number of cases in the U.S. was the highest since 1995.

In Texas, 2018 saw the highest number of congenital syphilis cases in over 10 years. **Approximately 1 in 1,000 Texas babies were born with congenital syphilis.**

Do I Need to Get Tested for Syphilis?

Yes. Getting tested for syphilis and other STDs is part of routine prenatal care. *All persons who are pregnant are required by Texas law (HSC 81.090) to be tested for syphilis three times during pregnancy:*

1. At the **first prenatal visit**
2. In the **third trimester** (no sooner than 28 weeks gestation), and
3. Again at **delivery**.

If you haven't been tested during these visits, make sure you talk to your doctor about getting tested at your next check-up.

Many people can have syphilis and not know it. Some people have symptoms like a sore or a rash but the only way to know for sure if you have syphilis is to get a simple blood test.



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Getting tested routinely at your annual exam is another way to know your syphilis status. You may need to ask to be tested since syphilis testing is not part of most physicals or pap smears.

What Should I Do If I Am Diagnosed With Syphilis?

If you are diagnosed with syphilis be sure to get treatment right away and complete treatment following medical advice. If you are pregnant, when you get treated, your baby gets treated too! Syphilis can be treated and cured with antibiotics. Make sure your partner is treated. Your local health department can help with getting your partner(s) tested and treated.

When Should I Start Prenatal Care?

As soon as you think you might be pregnant you should go to the doctor. Starting care early and getting frequent check-ups will help you and your baby stay healthy. If you are worried about the cost of care or do not have insurance, find out more about [Texas Benefits for Pregnant Women](#) or call 877-345-7734.

Where Can I Get Tested for Syphilis and Other STDs?

You can [find clinics in your area to get tested](#) or find a doctor through [Healthy Texas Women](#).

Resources

Texas Benefits for Pregnant Women - yourtexasbenefits.hhsc.texas.gov/programs/health/women/pregnant

Syphilis testing locations - dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/testing/

Healthy Texas Women - healthytexaswomen.org/find-doctor

Texas syphilis testing during pregnancy law (HSC 81.090) - statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/HS/htm/HS.81.htm

FACTS TO CONSIDER

Syphilis is curable at all stages

Syphilis can be passed to the baby at any time during the pregnancy

Congenital syphilis is preventable

There were 367 cases of congenital syphilis in Texas in 2018

DSHS HIV/STD Program

(737) 255-4300

www.dshs.texas.gov/hivstd

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