

Hey Lady Peeps!

LET'S TALK ABOUT SYPHILIS

**IT'S A SEXUALLY
TRANSMITTED
INFECTION AND
IT IS ON THE
RISE IN QLD.**

**BE
100%
SURE**

**TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR
SEXUAL HEALTH AND
ASK ABOUT SYPHILIS**

LADYPEEPS.ORG.AU

#LadyPeeps
#AskAboutSyphilis
#TrueEducation

LET'S TALK ABOUT SYPHILIS

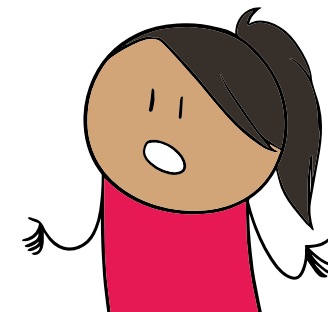
Syphilis is a sexually transmissible infection (STI) that may have no symptoms. If left untreated it will stay in your body and can be passed on to sexual partners, or to an unborn baby during pregnancy.

Thankfully, it's easy to **test, treat and cure!**



WAIT! I'M NOT A SYPHILIS KIND OF PERSON, SO WHY GET TESTED?

Don't listen to stereotypes! Absolutely ANYONE who has ever had oral, vaginal or anal sex can get syphilis if your sexual partner was infected, whether you've had one sexual partner or many.



DOES SYPHILIS HAVE ANY SYMPTOMS?

Like all STIs, there may be some symptoms or there may be no symptoms at all. Syphilis has four stages, if you do have symptoms they may include:

PRIMARY STAGE

- Sores on mouth, vulva, vagina, penis or anus
- May appear 9 days to 90 days after getting infection
- You may notice a hard, often painless sore around the mouth, vulva, vagina, penis or anus (this is where the infection entered the body). The sores may also hide deep in other places that are hard to see. And because they are often painless you may not notice them. They can show up anywhere between 9 – 90 days after you get the infection and they go away on their own – with or without treatment.

also have weight and/or hair loss. These symptoms can last 2–6 weeks at a time and may come and go for up to two years. Again – symptoms will go away with or without treatment.

LATENT STAGE

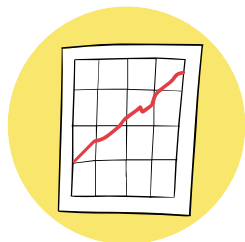
- No signs or symptoms for months or even years
- The latent stage is a time when there may be no signs or symptoms at all for months or even years, but without treatment you still have syphilis.

SECONDARY STAGE

- Reddish brown rash on torso, hands, feet
- Flu-like symptoms
- Symptoms can last 2–6 weeks
- At this point you may get a red or reddish-brown rash, often on the torso, the palms of your hands, or soles of your feet. It usually won't itch, and it is sometimes so faint you hardly notice it. You may feel sick and have mild flu-like symptoms like fatigue, mild fever, sore throat, swollen glands, head and muscle aches. You may

TERTIARY STAGE

- Very serious stage
- Occurs 10–30 years after infection began
- Can affect heart, brain, nervous system etc.
- Tertiary syphilis is very serious and would occur 10–30 years after your infection began. Tertiary syphilis can affect many different organ systems in the body including the blood vessels, the heart, the brain and the nervous system. The disease damages your internal organs and can lead to death.



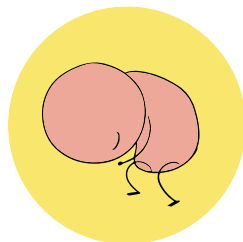
SYPHILIS IS BACK – ARE YOU POSITIVE YOU'RE NEGATIVE?

A common disease in centuries gone by, syphilis was almost eradicated in many countries but is now on the rise again globally, including in Australia. Since 2013 there has been a rapid increase in syphilis infections in Queensland in young people aged 15–29 years and men who have sex with men (who might also have sex with women).



WAIT, WHAT ABOUT SYPHILIS AND PREGNANCY?

A pregnant woman/person with untreated syphilis can unknowingly pass it on to their unborn baby (this is called congenital syphilis). Testing for syphilis in pregnancy is important because the infection can be treated before the baby is born and prevent or minimise harm to the baby. It is critical to have a syphilis test in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy as untreated syphilis can be passed on to an unborn baby several years after a person was first infected.



DO YOU KNOW WHAT CONGENITAL SYPHILIS IS?

Congenital syphilis can be a severe, disabling and life-threatening infection for babies. An infected baby may die in the womb (stillbirth) or shortly after birth, or it may be born prematurely and have serious physical and neurological abnormalities caused by the syphilis infection.

REMEMBER! IN THE EARLY STAGES SYPHILIS IS EASILY CURABLE. LATE TREATMENT WILL STILL CURE THE INFECTION AND STOP FUTURE HARM TO YOUR BODY, BUT EXISTING DAMAGE CANNOT BE REPAIRED OR REVERSED.

IS HAVING AN STI LIKE SYPHILIS SOMETHING TO BE ASHAMED ABOUT? NO WAY!

Don't let shame or stigma stop you from taking control of your sexual health, because it's EASY to do something about it. Most people on the planet have sex so don't let anyone make you feel ashamed or dismiss you for wanting to be safe, informed and pro-active about your sexual health.

TESTING FOR STIS LIKE SYPHILIS IS NO BIG DEAL

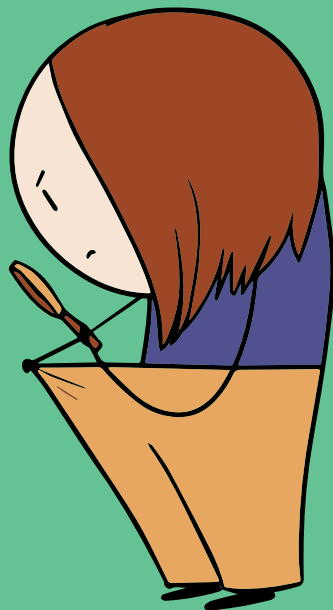
Yes, testing is easier than you think, and because many STIs often don't have symptoms it's the only way to be 100% sure.

AWKWARD.....NOT!

There's no need to feel uncomfortable, awkward or embarrassed asking for an STI test with a clinician – it's literally their job and completely confidential. Plus, you certainly won't be the first (or last) person who's walked through their door asking to be tested, believe me, they've heard it all before!

WHERE CAN I GET TESTED?

Visit Stop the Rise for a list of locations.
www.stopherise.initiatives.qld.gov.au



WHAT TO EXPECT WITH AN STI TEST



QUICK AND EASY

Some STIs require you to pee in a cup, and for syphilis it's a quick blood test or swab of the genitals, mouth or throat.



CONFIDENTIAL

Your STI test results are completely confidential so there's no need to worry about anyone finding out if you don't want them to.



FREE

There are lots of free clinics across Queensland or you can visit your GP or any sexual health clinic for testing.



TREATMENT

Most STIs are easily treatable with oral antibiotics, and syphilis is treated with an injection of penicillin. It's really that simple.



BE PROUD OF YOURSELF!

Whatever the results be proud of yourself, STI testing is not only important for your own health but it also makes you are responsible sexual partner.

SO HOW DO YOU LOWER YOUR RISK OF GETTING SYPHILIS OR OTHER STIS?

- Avoiding sex with someone who has a visible ulcer or sore on their genitals, mouth or throat (but remember you can't always see them!).
- Having regular STI checks and getting your sexual partners to do the same (recommendations for STI testing can vary depending on where you live, your sexual history, and who you have sex with. For further information please visit www.sti.guidelines.org.au).
- Completing the full course of treatment if you have an STI like syphilis.
- Follow up screening as directed by your clinician.
- Being in a mutually monogamous relationship with a partner who has been tested for syphilis, does not have syphilis, and neither of you has other sexual partners.
- Always using condoms and water-based lubricant for vaginal and anal sex.
- Always using dental dams for oral sex.

PARTNER NOTIFICATION

To stop transmission, it is crucial for sexual partners to also be tested and, if positive, treated at the same time. Health professionals can assist you to identify and inform your sexual partners.

You can also send a message via the following websites if you want to contact your partners anonymously:

- Letthemknow.org.au (for everyone),
- Thedramadownunder.info (for gay and bisexual men and men who have sex with men)
- Bettertoknow.org.au (for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people).

AND REMEMBER, YOUR SEXUAL HEALTH IS IMPORTANT – SO TAKE CONTROL AND GET TESTED...

IT'S NO BIG DEAL!



HELPFUL INFORMATION

Stop the Rise of STIs – A sexual health campaign by Queensland Health aimed at Queenslanders aged 15 to 29 years providing comprehensive information on all STIs, testing and treatment, and safer sex options.
www.stopherise.initiatives.qld.gov.au

Queensland sexual health and HIV services – Provides a detailed list of sexual health and HIV clinics and services across Queensland.
www.health.qld.gov.au

FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES:

Young, Deadly, Syphilis Free – Information about syphilis for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
www.youngdeadlyfree.org.au

Young, Deadly, Free – Information about all STIs and BBVs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
www.youngdeadlyfree.org.au

Deadly Choices – Empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make health choices for themselves and their families.
www.deadlychoices.com.au

Better to know – Sexual health information and contact tracing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
www.bettertoknow.org.au

FOR LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITIES:

Open doors Youth Service – Support services for LGBTIQ young people and their families.
www.opendoors.net.au

Diverse Voices – A peer-based telephone and internet chat counselling, referral and information service to ALL people dealing with issues relating to sexuality and/or gender.
www.diversevoices.org.au/services

Clinic 30 – A free service dedicated to the mental and sexual health of the LGBTIQ community in Brisbane.
www.quac.org.au/clinic-30

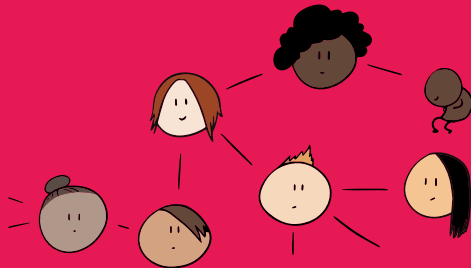
Stonewall Medical Centre – Services the general health and sexual health of Brisbane's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer / questioning (LGBTIQ+), sex workers and the straight / heterosexual community.
www.stonewall.com.au

FOR CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE POPULATIONS:

Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland – ECCQ supports and advocates for the needs, interests and contributions of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Queensland.
www.eccq.com.au

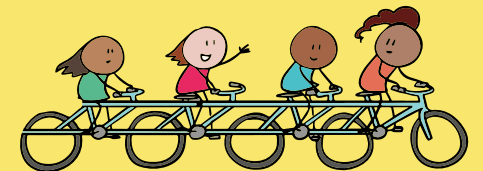
WARNING #1

If you EVER get syphilis, and it is not treated the signs and symptoms will go away and you may feel well, but the infection will REMAIN in the body (until you are treated) and can be passed on to sexual partners or an unborn baby in pregnancy.



WARNING #2

Being treated for syphilis once does not protect a person (including an unborn baby in pregnancy) from being infected again. Even following successful treatment people can be re-infected if they have unprotected sexual contact with a person with infectious syphilis.



MYTHS VS FACTS ABOUT SYPHILIS

MYTH #1: SYPHILIS IS A DISEASE OF THE PAST.

FACT #1:

Between 2013 and 2017, the notification rate of infectious syphilis in Australia increased 135% from 7.8 per 100,000 in 2013 to 18.3 per 100,000 in 2017, with an increase in both men (119%) and women (309%) (Kirby Institute 2018a).

MYTH #2: SYPHILIS CAN'T BE SPREAD THROUGH ORAL SEX.

FACT #2:

You can get syphilis by direct contact with a syphilis sore during vaginal, anal AND oral sex.

MYTH #3: YOU WOULD KNOW IF YOU HAD SYPHILIS.

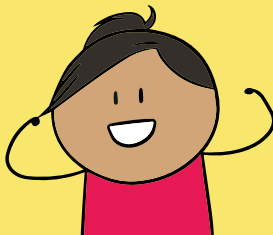
FACT #3:

Like all STIs syphilis can have no symptoms, or you might not notice them. People can have syphilis for a long time and not know it. It may not be obvious if your sexual partner has syphilis because syphilis sores can be hidden in the vagina, vulva, anus, under the foreskin of the penis, or in the mouth.

MYTH #4: SYPHILIS IS INCURABLE.

FACT #4:

Total myth because syphilis CAN be cured with antibiotics.



WE GOT THIS!

That's all from me lady peeps, thanks for reading. And remember, the only way to be 100% sure that you don't have an STI is to ask for a test. Let's unite as a sisterhood, be open and encourage your friends to do the same. We got this!

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