

Syphilis: Test and treat guide

For more information about syphilis, go to waac.com.au/syphilis

WHAT IS SYPHILIS?

Syphilis is an STI caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum* which can cause serious complications or death if untreated

WA is currently experiencing an outbreak. Cases of congenital syphilis are on the rise. It is important to have a low threshold for testing for syphilis

PRIORITY POPULATIONS

- Females of reproductive age
- Men who have sex with men
- Asymptomatic people <35yo
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Pregnant people
- People experiencing homelessness
- People who inject drugs

Ask the question

Are you sexually active?

When was the last time you were tested for an STI?

Presentation

Infectious < 2 years

Commonly called Primary, Secondary and Early Latent Syphilis

- Ulcer/s or chancre/s around genitals, anus or mouth
- Generalised rash
- Fever, malaise, headache
- Enlarged lymph nodes
- Neurological signs, cranial nerve palsies, ophthalmic signs, meningitis*

*Can also be asymptomatic

Non-infectious > 2 years

Commonly called Late Latent and Tertiary Syphilis

Skin lesions (gummas), cardiovascular or neurological implications*

*Can also be asymptomatic

Testing

Blood test

Ask for Syphilis Serology

Dry swab any ulcer

Ask for a Syphilis PCR

Testing in pregnancy

Test at booking, 28 weeks, and 36 weeks

More frequent testing is indicated in certain situations, risk groups and regions. Refer to Statewide Maternity Shared Care Guidelines for more info

Remember

No STI check is complete without a syphilis screen

Results

T. pallidum Ab

Detected

Not Detected

TPPA/TPHA

If positive, syphilis confirmed

RPR/VDRL

Marker of disease activity (Seek advice if needed)

If symptomatic and suspicious of syphilis, consider repeating serology in 2-4 weeks

Treatment

Infectious

Benzathine Penicillin (Bicillin L-A)
2.4 mu I MI stat

Non-infectious

Benzathine Penicillin (Bicillin L-A)
2.4 mu I MI weekly for 3 weeks

(Bicillin L-A) is available through The Doctors Bag

Please seek specialist advice if your patient is allergic to penicillin

Follow-up and contact tracing is essential. Refer to the WA Health Silver Book for the guidelines



STI Info Line
1300 56 52 57

Need advice? Just ask

M Clinic - 1300 56 52 57
RPH Sexual Health Clinic - 9224 2178
South Terrace Clinic - 9431 2149