

# Syphilis

مرض الزهري, сифилис, 梅毒, Syllis, Sífilis, Kila,

Important (wazīyah) Information



## Syphilis?

---

Gay, bisexual, queer, a man who has sex with other men, **then this is for you.**  
Also available in Chinese, French, Irish, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic and Spanish at [www.ghn.ie](http://www.ghn.ie)

## Syphilis is a serious sexually transmitted infection

---

But can be easily cured if diagnosed early through a simple blood test.  
In Ireland and other countries syphilis is quite common among men who have sex with men. You can pass on or get syphilis if you are sexually active, no matter what age, race, class or creed and whether you use pubs, clubs, saunas, cruising areas, personal adverts or the internet to meet other men for sex.  
This leaflet will provide you with information on syphilis prevention, symptoms, testing and treatment.

## Q: What is Syphilis?

---

A: Syphilis (a bacteria) is a sexually transmitted infection.

## Q: How is Syphilis passed on?

---

- A:
- Unprotected oral sex (sucking or rimming)
  - Unprotected Anal or Vaginal Sex
  - Using fingers or hands



It can also be passed on through direct contact with a sore or rash and not necessarily the exchange of body fluids. *This means what is regarded as safer sex for HIV may not protect you against syphilis.* Using condoms may reduce the risk. You **cannot** get syphilis from casual contact, utensils, clothing, toilet seats, swimming pools and saunas.

## Q: What are the signs and symptoms of Syphilis?

---

A: 50% of infected people show no symptoms though they may still pass on syphilis.

### Stage 1 (primary Syphilis);

Is the appearance of an ulcer-type (painless) sore (chancre pronounced shancar), which can appear any time between 10 to 90 days after infection. It usually heals by itself (disappears) in approximately one month. The sore can be around your groin area, on your penis, inside around your anus (or vagina), or inside or around your mouth.

### Stage 2 (secondary Syphilis);

Has many signs and symptoms, such as, fever, headaches, hair loss and muscle aches, but usually a rash anywhere on your body, most often on your hands and the soles of your feet. Again this tends to clear up by itself.

### Stage 3 (latent and tertiary syphilis);

After stage 2 syphilis becomes dormant (hidden). There may be no signs for many years, but left untreated it can still severely damage your health. If you

have syphilis for more than two years you can no longer pass this on, you can however become ill later with heart, lung or brain problems, possibly leading to death. *It's worth noting that after two years if you are sexually active you can become re-infected with syphilis again and this can be passed on.*

If you are HIV positive syphilis may present differently than for those who are HIV negative, and may require a longer course of treatment.

Q: But I haven't got any symptoms!

A: You do not have to. Up to 50% of people infected with syphilis show no symptoms, but can still pass it on to others during sex.

Q: Then how will I find out if I have it?

A: A simple Blood Test. Syphilis is easy to diagnose by having a blood test for the antibodies. In some cases (at an STI/GUM Clinic) it can be diagnosed by examining fluid from sores under the microscope.

Q: What happens if my blood test is positive for Syphilis?

A: Syphilis is treatable with specific antibiotics. To ensure the infection has cleared up several follow-up visits to the clinic may be necessary.

Q: When I am treated can I get it again?

A: Yes. Even when treated successfully you can catch syphilis again, from having sex with an infected person.

## Q: What if my blood test is negative?

---

A: Great! But you might need to re-test in three months. It can take between 2 to 90 days (the window period) for syphilis antibodies to show up in the blood. This is why testing once or twice per year for syphilis is recommended.

## Q: Is one test enough?

---

A: No. If you are a sexually active man with different sex partners it is recommended to test at least once or twice each year.

## Q: What about Syphilis and HIV?

---

A: Having syphilis can make it easier to get HIV. If you have HIV and get syphilis it may present differently than for those who don't have HIV. Importantly if you have HIV and contract syphilis you may pass on HIV more easily to a sex partner. It's important whether you are HIV positive or not to follow the safer sex guidelines.

## Q: How can I be sure not to get Syphilis?

---

A: If you have one regular sexual partner, and you have both agreed not to have sex with others, and you have both tested negative for syphilis.



## Q: I like having sex with different people so what can I do?

A: Syphilis is easy to catch or pass on even from one sexual contact. However, the more sexual partners you have the more chances of catching it. So you can reduce the chances by:

- Using condoms for anal (and vaginal) sex
- Using condoms for oral sex (try flavoured ones)
- Washing sex toys before and after sharing
- Using a condom for rimming, by cutting and making a square out of it.
- Using latex gloves for fingering or fisting

*It's important to remember that the Syphilis sore and rash can be in areas which are not covered by condoms so there is no complete protection.*

Look out for unusual sores or discharge from your own and partner's mouth, penis or anus. If you are not sure, stop having sex and get it checked out at an STI/GUM clinic as soon as you can.

Read up on sexual health and safer sex information aimed at men who have sex with men, contact your local gay health group, web-site or switchboard.

## Q: Where can I get tested?

A: **At the Gay Men's Health Service (GMHS) clinic in Dublin or the Gay Men's Clinic Belfast or at your local STI/GUM clinic.**

> **GMHS Clinic (walk-in)**

19 Haddington Road, Dublin 4. Tuesdays and Wednesdays 5.30pm to 7.30pm.

Tel: 01 669 9553 or SMS 087 941 0934



- > **Gay Men's Clinic (walk in and appointments)**  
Royal Victoria Hospital, Falls Rd. Belfast.  
Thursdays 5.00pm to 7.00pm. Tel: 028 90 634 050

## List of STI / GUM Clinics

---

- > **Gay Men's Health Service, Dublin 4.** 01 669 9553
- > **St. James's Hospital, Dublin 8.** 01 416 2315
- > **Mater Hospital, Dublin 7.** 01 803 2063\*
- > **St.Fintan's Hospital, Portlaoise, Co Laois.** 057 936 0134\*
- > **Regional Hospital, Waterford City.** 051 842 646 \*
- > **General Hospital, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary.** C/O 051 842 646 \*
- > **Victoria Hospital, Cork City.** 021 496 6844 \*
- > **Regional Hospital, Tralee, Co Kerry.** C/O 021 496 6844\*
- > **Regional Hospital, Limerick City.** 061 482 382 \*
- > **General Hospital, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary** C/O 061 482 382 \*
- > **General Hospital, Ennis, Co. Clare.** C/O 061 482 382 \*
- > **General Hospital, Castlebar, Co Mayo.** 094 902 1733\*
- > **University Hospital, Galway City.** 091 525 200\*
- > **Portiuncula Hospital, Co Galway.** 090 964 8372\*
- > **Regional Hospital, Sligo Town.** 071 917 0473\*
- > **Altnagelvin Hospital, Derry City.** 028 71 611 269\* (048 from R0I)
- > **Coleraine Hospital, Co. Derry.** 028 703 460 248\* (048 from Rol)
- > **Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast City.** 028 90 634 050\* (048 from Rol)
- > **Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry, Co Down.** 028 308 350 00\* (048 from R0I)
- > \* call for appointments

## For further information:

---

- > **GMHS**  
01 873 4952
- > **SGMHP**  
021 427 8470
- > **The Rainbow Project Belfast**  
028 90 319 030 (048 from Rol)
- > **The Rainbow Project Derry**  
028 71 283 030
- > **HIV and Drugs Helplines**    Free Phone  
Republic of Ireland:            1800 459 459  
Northern Ireland:                0800137 437
- > **Or visit the following websites:**  
[www.ghn.ie](http://www.ghn.ie)  
[www.gaymenshealthservice.ie](http://www.gaymenshealthservice.ie)  
[www.rainbow-project.org](http://www.rainbow-project.org)  
[www.gayhealthproject.com](http://www.gayhealthproject.com)  
[www.yoursexualhealth.ie](http://www.yoursexualhealth.ie)

**Keep sexy healthy - read up on all sexually transmitted infections  
and safer sex methods at [www.ghn.ie](http://www.ghn.ie)**



# Syphilis

مرض الزهري, سفيليس, كيتا, 梅毒, сифилис, сифилис, الزهري  
Important (wazih) Information

