



ADVICE AND FACTS ABOUT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

DET HÄR ÄR EN ÖVERSÄTTNING TILL ENGELSKA AV FAKTABLADET RÅD OCH FAKTA OM SEXUELLT ÖVERFÖRDA INFEKTIONER – SYFILIS.

Syphilis

Syphilis is caused by a bacterium. The bacterium can be present in the mucus membrane of a sex organ, but also in the rectum, in the mouth and in the throat. The bacterium can also be found in sores or in rashes on the skin caused by the bacteria. Syphilis is spread via unprotected sexual contact and is easily transmitted between people during vaginal intercourse, anal sex and oral sex. Syphilis can be transmitted via saliva. The bacterium then makes its way into sores or wounds in the oral mucosa. You can also contract syphilis via blood if you use drugs and share syringes and needles with someone who carries the bacteria.

Symptoms of syphilis

You will not necessarily have symptoms when you are infected with syphilis. It can take many years for the disease to manifest itself. If you have early symptoms, known as primary syphilis, these will appear roughly two weeks to three months after you have been infected. In such cases you may have sores on your genitals or in places where the bacterium has found its way via the mucus membrane, for example around the anus or in the oral cavity. The sores will not necessarily burn or cause pain. Lymphatic glands close to the sore often swell up.

Get tested for syphilis

Testing for syphilis is free as the disease is covered in the Communicable Diseases Act. You can be tested by providing a blood sample. Samples can also be taken from any sores in which the bacterium may be found. The bacterium can be detected no sooner than four weeks after infection. To be sure that the infection is picked up by the test, it may be necessary to wait three months after the infection. Get tested if you suspect that you have syphilis.

Treatment

Treatment for syphilis is free. The infection is normally treated with penicillin injections for one to three weeks. Following treatment, a diagnostic test is always taken. Your sexual partner also needs to be tested if you carry the bacteria. If you have several partners, all of them need to be tested.

Important points about syphilis

You can get syphilis several times. Syphilis sores can heal by themselves and the infection may remain in the body for many years. You may have complications if the infection is not treated. The risk of complications declines if you receive treatment quickly.

Syphilis can return in secondary and tertiary stages of infection. Here, the symptoms differ from those of the first stage. In secondary syphilis, for example, you may experience scaly rashes on the body, fever and hair loss. The secondary stage of syphilis occurs seven to ten weeks after the effects of the first stage have healed. Tertiary syphilis can occur much later and result in severe damage to the cardiovascular system. Skin and mucus membranes can also be damaged, as well as the nervous system and the brain. Damage to blood vessels, the nervous system and the brain can be life-threatening if you do not receive treatment.

Untreated syphilis can be transmitted to children during pregnancy and thus result in the child being severely damaged. During pregnancy, expectant mothers will be offered a syphilis test. This is to allow you to receive treatment and protect the child.

