

Mayo Clinic Minute

Symptoms and stages of syphilis

Video	Audio
	Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection caused by the bacterium <i>Treponema pallidum</i> .
Stacey Rizza, M.D. Infectious Diseases Mayo Clinic	Dr. Stacey Rizza, an infectious diseases specialist at Mayo Clinic, says syphilis affects men and women – and can present in various stages. “Primary syphilis causes an ulcer, and this sometimes isn’t noticed because it’s painless and can be inside the vagina or on the cervix ... After a few weeks, two months, they can get secondary syphilis, which is a rash.”
	It may then progress to latent stage syphilis and, finally, the most serious stage: tertiary
	Pregnant women are not immune to syphilis. Congenital syphilis can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth or infant deaths. That’s why all pregnant women should be screened.
	Syphilis is preventable and treatable. Since the 1940s, penicillin has been the best treatment.
	As for prevention, Dr. Rizza recommends barrier protection during sex.
	“And that’s during oral sex, anal sex, vaginal sex – using condoms, dental dams and any other barrier protection.”
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I’m Vivien Williams.