CANADIAN JOINT FORCES COMMAND | COMMANDEMENT DE FORCES INTERARMÉES DU CANADA

CANADIAN FORCES HEALTH SERVICES HEADQUARTERS | QUARTIER GÉNÉRAL DES SERVICES DE SANTÉ DES FORCES ARMÉES CANADIENNES

CONGENITAL SYPHILIS

Protecting You and Your Baby

Women and Diversity Health

Santé des femmes et de la diversité

Syphilis is a treatable infection. Testing before and during pregnancy can protect you and help prevent serious health problems for your baby.

What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection caused by bacteria.

It can be passed through:
- Vaginal sex
- Anal sex
- Oral sex

Symptoms:
- Often none
- A painless sore
- A rash

Congenital Syphilis in Canada

Reported increase from:

2018: 17 CASES

2023: 693 CASES

What is congenital syphilis?

A syphilis infection that is passed from a pregnant person to their baby during pregnancy or birth. Often has no symptoms at birth

It can cause:
- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Premature birth
- Low birth weight
- Developmental delays
- Other long-term health problems

Serious infections affecting the baby's:
- Eyes (blindness)
- Liver (enlarged liver and spleen)
- Bones and joints
- Brain (meningitis)
- Nerves
- Skin (jaundice)
- Hearing (deafness)

Reduce the risks

- ✓ Attend prenatal appointments
- ✓ Complete follow-up testing
- ✓ Encourage partners to get tested and treated if needed
- ✓ Get tested early in pregnancy
- ✓ Get treated if needed
- ✓ Use condoms to reduce sexually transmitted infection risks

Test is positive, what next?

Treatment with Antibiotics

Follow-up testing

You will receive:
- Information about syphilis
- Ongoing support

Learn More

Government of Canada:
Syphilis: Infection during pregnancy - Canada.ca

Ottawa Public Health:
Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections (STBBI)

Sources

- Public Health Agency of Canada. *Canadian Guidelines on Sexually Transmitted Infections: Syphilis Screening and Diagnostic Testing.*
- Public Health Agency of Canada. *Infectious Congenital Syphilis in Canada, 2023. Canada Communicable Disease Report, 2025.*
- Ottawa Public Health. *Staying Healthy in Pregnancy.*

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