



## 4. Syphilis

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease caused by bacteria called *Treponema pallidum*. It infects the genital area, lips, mouth, or anus of both men and women. At early stage one finds a single, small, painless sore. Sometimes it causes swelling in nearby lymph nodes. If you do not treat it, syphilis usually causes non-itchy skin rash, often on your hands and feet. The symptoms are irregular.

### Transmission

The route of transmission is by sexual contact. Although the bacterium is usually transmitted through the mucous membranes of the genital area, the mouth, or the anus, it also can pass through broken skin on other parts of the body. If not treated, symptoms may disappear but infection remains hidden in body and progresses with increasingly serious symptoms. Syphilis makes it easy to transmit other infections like HIV, Hep B and HCV. It can also lead to death in rare cases.

### Treatment & Prevention

Syphilis is however curable when treated in primary stage. The first choice of treatment is penicillin G. Tetracycline is used in patients, allergic to penicillin. However, avoid unsafe sexual activities and use a latex condom correctly and consistently. Since latex condoms protect covered parts only, the exposed parts should be washed with soap water as soon as possible after the act. Syphilis/AIDS cannot be contracted through toilet seats, daily activities, hot tubs or sharing utensils or clothings.