Government of **Western Australia**
North Metropolitan Health Service
Public Health and Clinical Excellence

Syphilis testing in pregnancy

Patient information

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia and pay respect to their elders past and present. North Metropolitan Health Service recognises, respects and values Aboriginal cultures as we walk a new path together.

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Pregnant or planning pregnancy?

Get tested for syphilis as soon as you know you are pregnant.

What is syphilis?

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection. There is currently a syphilis outbreak in WA.

Common symptoms of syphilis are shown (left), but some people have no symptoms (right).

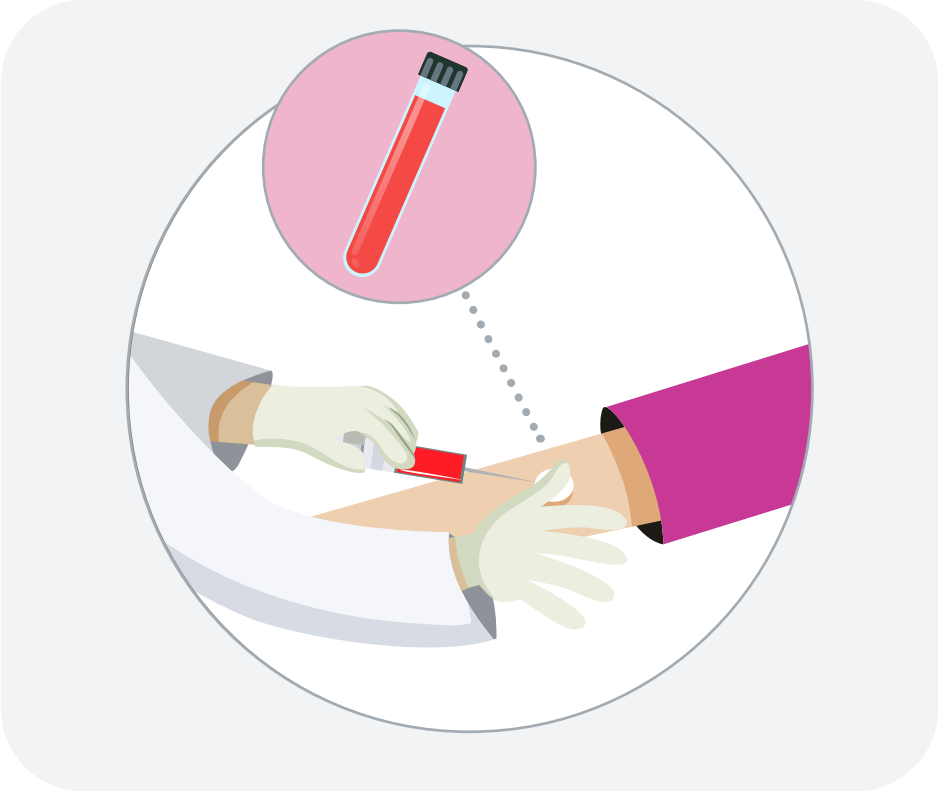
What is congenital syphilis?

When a pregnant woman has a syphilis infection, syphilis can pass to her unborn baby. This can cause miscarriage, premature birth and harm to the baby, occasionally resulting in the baby's death. Treatment can prevent this. This is why testing is so important.

Syphilis testing

The current pregnancy guidelines recommend all pregnant women be tested for syphilis **at least** three times during pregnancy:

1. At first healthcare visit
2. At 28 weeks
3. At 36 weeks.

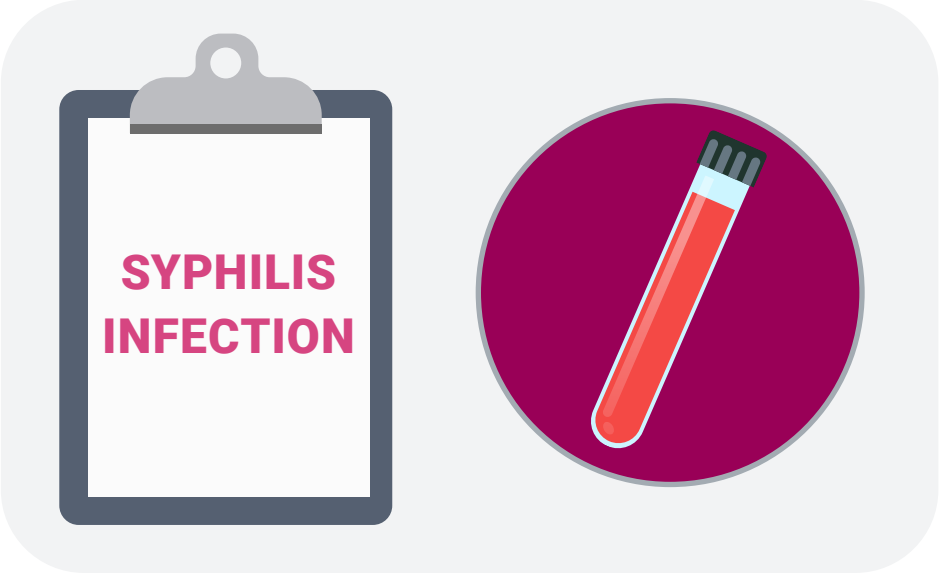


If you do **not** have syphilis

If your test shows you do not have syphilis, you will still be tested in pregnancy according to recommended guidelines. If symptoms (see page 5) develop, tell your doctor/midwife and have extra testing.

If you **have** syphilis

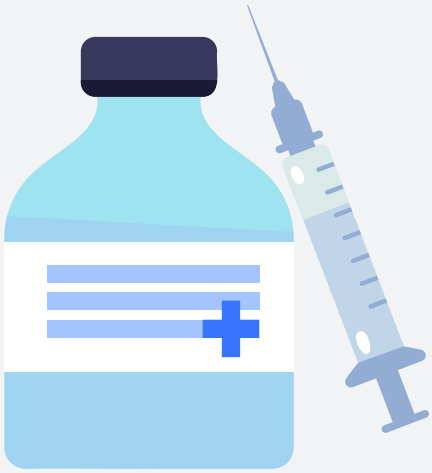
If your test shows you have syphilis, you will need treatment and have more frequent testing. Your doctor or midwife will explain this.



If you **have** syphilis

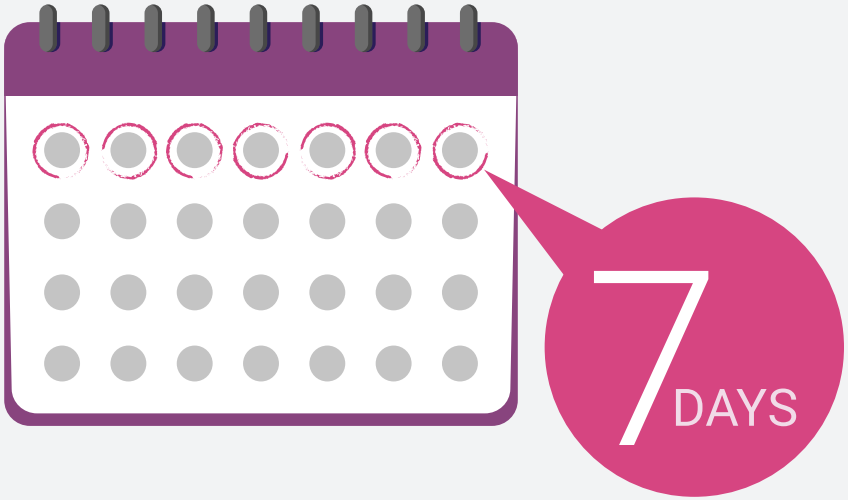
Syphilis treatment

Antibiotics are used to treat syphilis and can prevent the baby becoming infected.



If you **have** syphilis

Do not have any sexual activity until seven days after you and your partner/s have been treated.



Your doctor or midwife will arrange follow-up testing to make sure the antibiotics have worked.

If you **have** syphilis

You will be asked about who you have had sex with. It is very important that they get a blood test and treatment.

This will stop you getting reinfected with syphilis and protect your baby.

If you think you have been reinfected with syphilis, speak to your doctor or midwife as soon as you can.

If you **have** syphilis

The management will include:

Antibiotics

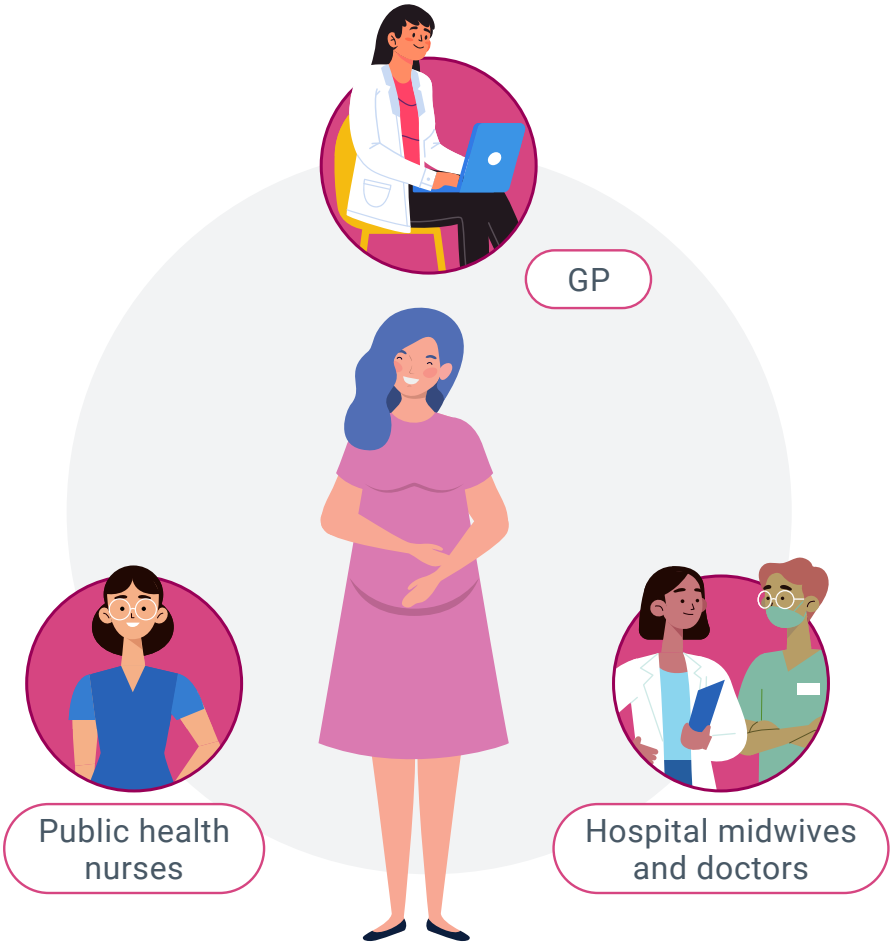
No sex for seven days after treatment

Testing and treating partner/s

Extra syphilis testing

If you **have** syphilis

You will be looked after by a team, such as your GP, hospital midwives and doctors, and public health nurses who might call to check how you're going. We work together to look after you and your pregnancy.



If you **have** syphilis

After you have your baby, your healthcare team will check on you and your baby before you go home and may arrange follow-up appointments.

Further information

Visit syphilis in pregnancy (healthywa.wa.gov.au).

or scan the QR code

CONSUMER REVIEWED

The information provided is for information purposes only. If you are a patient using this publication, you should seek assistance from a healthcare professional when interpreting these materials and applying them to your individual circumstances.

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