



high risk

Why Gay Men Are at Risk

According to one national study, the number of new syphilis cases among gay men is rising each year in several U.S. cities.

Efforts to educate gay men about syphilis have decreased. Because it can be cured, people no longer think it's a threat.

But it is still a deadly infection. And curing syphilis cannot repair the damage it has done to your body. You need to know the signs and symptoms of syphilis and how to avoid getting this deadly infection.



The Forgotten Killer

"Syphilis and other STIs that many have long forgotten continue to pose a significant health risk to gay men."

— Dr. Helene Gayle,
director of the Center for
Disease Control's (CDC)
National Center for HIV,
STD, and TB Prevention

Before penicillin was found as a cure for syphilis, thousands died every year from this sexually transmitted infection (STI).

But syphilis was not wiped out completely. Newer forms resisted penicillin treatments and even today many people are at high risk from this deadly disease. Those people especially at risk include people living in the southern United States, some ethnic minorities, and gay men.

History of Syphilis

www.intheknowzone.com/syphilis/history

For More Information

Go to www.intheknowzone.com for an extension of this pamphlet.

Increase your knowledge using the information, statistics, images, and links.

Test your understanding with a quick quiz.



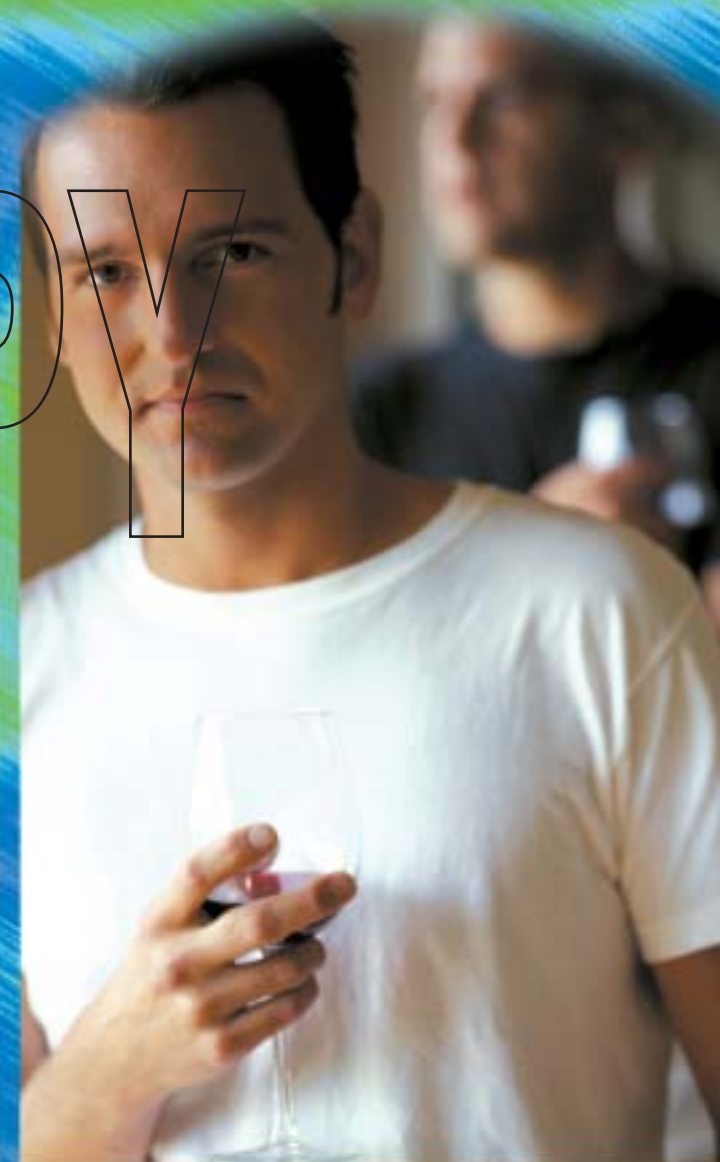
National STI Hotline:
(800) 227-8922

**Don't stay in
the dark.**

Get In the Know!

Syphilis

*the
forgotten killer*



in the know

© 2002 SYNDISTAR, INC.
5801 River Road
New Orleans, LA 70123-5106

800-841-9532 • www.syndistar.com • product #PB-PS45
This pamphlet may not be copied.

The Three Stages of Syphilis

Syphilis is caused by bacteria — or small germs — called *Treponema pallidum*.

Primary stage: Begins around 21 days after being infected. Signs include painless lesions, or *chancres*, in hard to detect areas, including the penis, anus, scrotum, or mouth. The chancres disappear in a few weeks, but syphilis continues to spread in your body.

Secondary stage: This stage can begin a few weeks or even a few months after infection. A rash of brown spots will appear on the infected person's body. The rash doesn't itch and usually appears on the back of the hands as well as the palms. Like the chancres, the rash goes away. Only a medical test can find syphilis after that.

Latent stage: Syphilis shows no outward signs or symptoms as it spreads during the final stage. Damage to the brain, heart and body includes:

- Blindness
- Paralysis
- Brain damage

The effects of syphilis can remain with a person for as long as 30 years. If untreated, the disease will kill an infected person. A person who could have been treated and cured.

Symptoms of Syphilis

www.intheknowzone.com/syphilis/symptoms



Syphilis Spreads Through Contact

Syphilis is spread through direct contact with the chancres. All types of sexual contact — vaginal, oral or anal — can spread the infection. But the infection can be spread even if you do not have intercourse.

Avoiding any sexual contact is the best way to avoid syphilis. Using a condom can help prevent infection. A condom should be used even during oral sex. You must make sure your genitals are completely covered. Any uncovered area can spread infection.

Get to know your partner well before choosing to have sex. Make sure you have both been tested by a doctor or at a medical clinic. This is the best way to prevent syphilis.

How is Syphilis Spread?

www.intheknowzone.com/syphilis/symptoms

penicillin

Curable Infection, Permanent Damage

Syphilis can be treated at any stage with penicillin, a common antibiotic. Any damage done to the body, however, is permanent and irreversible.

Prevention of syphilis and other STIs is the best way to live a healthy life. Stay aware of the signs and know that if you are a sexually active gay male, you are at risk.

Syphilis Treatment

www.intheknowzone.com/syphilis/treatment

Syphilis and HIV

A recent survey found that 52.3 percent of gay men did not know that syphilis is becoming an increasing problem. The same survey found that 42.5 percent did not know that being infected with syphilis puts them at higher risk of being infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Having syphilis makes you 2-5 times more likely to get HIV. If you have HIV and Syphilis, you are 2-5 times more likely to spread HIV to your partner.

Ways to Prevent Syphilis

Not having any sexual contact is the best way to avoid infection. Using a condom can help prevent the spread of syphilis, but it is not 100% effective. Sex without a condom is only safe when you and your uninfected partner only have sex with each other.

Follow these tips to avoid Syphilis and other STIs:

- Get to know your partner before having sexual contact
- Wear a condom during all types of sexual contact
- Avoid making decisions about sex when using alcohol or drugs
- Get tested by a doctor or at a medical clinic at least once a year

Be open and share your concerns about infection with your partner. He will thank you for it.

Syphilis Testing

www.intheknowzone.com/syphilis/testing

