Syphilis

What syphilis is
Syphilis (SI-fi-liss) is a disease caused by a bacteria. When a person first gets syphilis, doctors can take care of it with penicillin and other antibiotics. But the longer you have syphilis, the harder it is to cure.

Without treatment, syphilis can cause:

- Heart problems
- Brain problems
- Blindness
- Death

How you can get syphilis
You can get syphilis by having sex with someone who has this disease.

How syphilis can harm your baby
A pregnant woman who has syphilis can give it to her baby. The baby can get it during the pregnancy, or at the time of birth.

Babies born with syphilis can have problems with their:

- Bones
- Liver
- Blood
- Lungs (She might have trouble breathing and get pneumonia, or a serious infection in the lungs.)
- Skin
- Spleen
- Eyes
- Hearing

How you can protect you and your baby against syphilis
Watch out for early signs of syphilis, like:

- Sores called chancres. These are usually on the genitals or the mouth.
- Headaches
- Hair loss
- A low fever

If you're pregnant and have these signs, go to the doctor right away! The doctor can easily treat syphilis with medicine like penicillin. But you have to treat the syphilis before your 18th week of pregnancy. Otherwise, you could pass it to your baby.

If your baby is born with syphilis, get her treated with penicillin right away. This will help prevent problems in the future.