

Congenital Syphilis:

PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR BABY

Syphilis is a serious infection that can cause lifelong health problems if left untreated. When a pregnant person has syphilis, the infection can pass to their baby during pregnancy or birth, leading to congenital syphilis. Babies born with this condition can suffer from severe complications affecting their skin, bones, liver, and other organs.



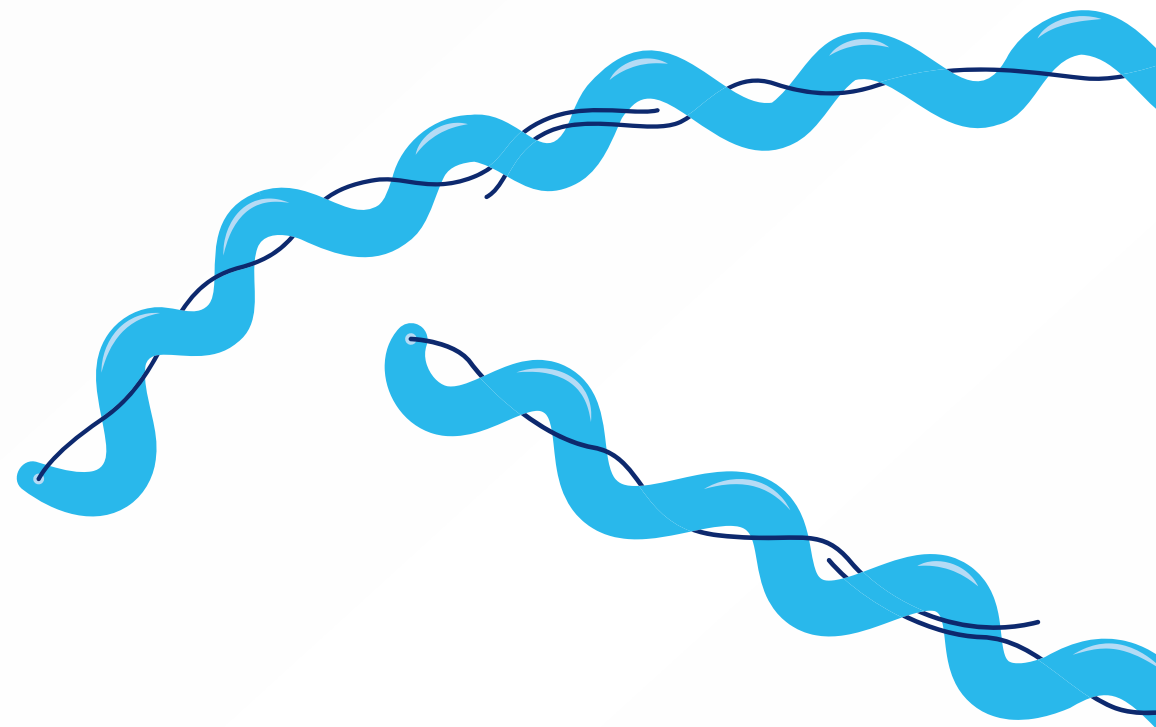
INCREASING HEALTH ISSUE^{1,2}

In recent years, cases of congenital syphilis (CS) have risen sharply across the United States. Rates have increased more than tenfold since 2012, with the highest numbers seen in women under 24. In just the past few years, cases have continued to climb, with nearly 4,000 reported in 2024.

CONTRACTING CONGENITAL SYPHILIS

A baby gets congenital syphilis when the infection passes from the mother to the baby during pregnancy or birth. In congenital syphilis, the bacteria enter the baby's bloodstream and spread directly to many organs. In acquired syphilis, the infection begins at the site of sexual contact and spreads through the blood later.





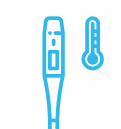
The impact on the baby depends on when the infection is treated during the pregnancy.







SYMPTOMS OF CONGENITAL SYPHILIS

Babies with CS may look healthy at first, but symptoms can appear soon after birth.

Early signs can include:

-  Runny or stuffy nose that doesn't get better
-  Rashes on the hands, feet, or body
-  Swollen belly or large liver or spleen
-  Bone pain or problems moving arms or legs
-  Fever, anemia (low red blood cells), or poor weight gain

If untreated, congenital syphilis can cause serious and lifelong problems, such as:

-  Vision or hearing loss
-  Bone deformities
-  Tooth and facial changes
-  Liver, heart, or brain damage

SYMPTOMS OF SYPHILIS IN ADULTS

Syphilis infections can be serious. Without treatment, the infection can damage multiple organ systems, including the heart, blood vessels, brain, and nervous system. Often, the only symptom of early syphilis is a sore, which is round and firm. If syphilis is not treated at this stage, it develops into further symptoms that may include:

-  Fever
-  Sore throat
-  Headaches
-  Patchy hair loss
-  Muscle aches
-  Fatigue
-  A rash on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet

If the infection continues to develop, it can begin to affect the brain, ears, and eyes. The infection can then damage multiple organ systems across your body.

Testing for Syphilis

Congenital syphilis can be hard to diagnose in newborns because a pregnant person's antibodies can affect test results. That's why testing for syphilis early in pregnancy is so important. Patients at higher risk should be tested again later in pregnancy and at delivery, since infection can happen at any time.

Protecting your health starts with knowing your status. HNL Lab Medicine makes it simple to get tested for syphilis. No doctor's order or insurance needed! Through HNL Lab Tests Direct, you can easily purchase a [syphilis test online](#) and visit any of our convenient [Patient Service Centers](#) for a quick blood draw.

If your results are abnormal, you can share them with your healthcare provider for follow-up care and treatment. Early testing helps prevent serious complications and protects both you and your baby. Take control of your health today with [HNL Lab Tests Direct!](#)

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REFERENCES

¹ Leslie S.W., Vaidya R. (Updated 2024, August 17). Congenital and Maternal Syphilis. In StatPearls. StatPearls Publishing. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK537087/>.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2025, January 31). About Congenital Syphilis. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.cdc.gov/syphilis/about/about-congenital-syphilis.html>.