

Syphilis in Indigenous Communities



Syphilis rates are on the rise in Canada, including in Indigenous communities.

Sexual and reproductive healthcare is key for your holistic wellness.

Spread and symptoms

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted and blood borne infection (STBBI) mainly spread through unprotected vaginal, anal and oral sex. Congenital syphilis can be passed on to an unborn baby during pregnancy and at the time of delivery. Syphilis can also be spread through needle sharing.

Many people won't have symptoms early on, but syphilis can cause:

- Painless, open sores on or inside the penis, vagina, rectum, throat or mouth
- Body rash and flu-like symptoms
- Swollen glands in the groin, behind the ears, under the jaw and in the armpits

Reduce the risk



Prevention: Use a condom correctly every time you have sex. Condoms don't offer full protection if sores are not covered during sex.



Confidential testing: A blood test and swab for syphilis is quick and easy. Talk to your healthcare provider about confidential testing for syphilis and other STBBIs. If you are sexually active, being tested regularly is an important part of a healthy sex life for you and your partner.



Treatment: Seek treatment, and culturally safe care and services. Syphilis is easily treated with antibiotics early on. Without treatment, syphilis can cause serious, permanent damage and even death.

Medications and treatments are available to eligible First Nations and recognized Inuit through Non-Insured Health Benefits, regardless of where they live.

Indigenous resources

Culturally-appropriate supports are essential to help address these higher rates of syphilis infections:

Sexual and Reproductive Health – Native Women's Association of Canada

<https://nwac.ca/policy/sexual-and-reproductive-health>

Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections – First Nations Health Authority

<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control/blood-borne-disease-and-sexually-transmitted-infections-hiv-aids>

Sexual Health – Pauktuutit

<https://pauktuutit.ca/health/sexual-health/>

To learn more, visit:
canada.ca/syphilis



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Canada