

Congenital Syphilis (Mother-to-Child Syphilis)

1. What is congenital syphilis (CS)?

Congenital syphilis (CS) is when a pregnant person passes syphilis* to their baby during pregnancy or childbirth. If left untreated, it can cause serious health problems for you and your baby.

2. What are the symptoms of CS?

Most of the time symptoms may not appear at birth, but without treatment, the baby may develop serious health problems in the first few weeks after birth, or even years later.

Your baby may have some of these symptoms:

- Skin rash
- Discharge from the nose (snuffles)
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes)
- Deformed bones
- Low blood count
- Enlarged liver and spleen
- Brain and nerve problems, like blindness or deafness

3. How can CS affect my baby?

The effects depend on how long you had syphilis and when or if you were treated for syphilis. CS can cause: miscarriage (losing the baby during pregnancy), stillbirth (a baby born deceased), prematurity (a baby born early), low birth weight, or death shortly after birth.

4. How can I get tested?

The only way to know you have syphilis is to get tested. A syphilis test is part of prenatal care (medical care during pregnancy). Prenatal care is very important to keep you and your baby healthy. You should be tested for syphilis 3 times during your pregnancy: during the 1st trimester, early in the 3rd trimester (between 28-32 weeks) and at delivery.

5. How is CS treated?

Syphilis can be treated and cured, even during pregnancy, with antibiotics (medicine that kills germs). Make sure your sex partner(s) get tested and treated too. This will help them stay healthy and prevent them from spreading syphilis to others or you (again). Babies with CS can also be treated and cured with antibiotics.

6. How can I prevent giving my baby syphilis?

- Use a condom or dental dam every time you have sex.
- Limit your sex partner(s).
- Go to your prenatal visits for testing and treatment as early as possible. If you don't have a regular doctor, call the STD hotline (800) 758-0880 to find out where to get tested and treated for free.



Key Points

- CS is on the rise in Los Angeles County.
- CS is when a pregnant person passes syphilis to their baby during pregnancy or childbirth.
- Prenatal care is very important to find and treat syphilis.
- CS is curable and preventable.

For more information:

**Los Angeles County
Department of Public
Health**

www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/dhsp/

**California Department of
Public Health**

www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/CongenitalSyphilis.aspx

**Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
(CDC)**

www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/stdfact-congenital-syphilis.htm

***For more information on Syphilis for those who are pregnant, please see "Syphilis FAQ".**

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