

## Syphilis- "The Great Imitator"



*Did you know?...* Syphilis has been called the great imitator because its signs and symptoms are so similar to other infections and diseases. Over 36,000 new cases of syphilis occur in the U.S. each year. During 2004-2008, rates of syphilis increased the most among 15-24 year-old men and women.

### *How is Syphilis Spread?*

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*, particularly by direct contact with a syphilis sore of someone who's already infected.

### *Signs and Symptoms*

The most common initial symptom is a small, firm, round, painless sore on the mouth, lips, genitals, or anus. This sore usually appears about 3 weeks after infection, and lasts 3-6 weeks.

- Skin rash (especially on palms of hands and soles of feet)
- Hair loss
- Sore throat
- Nausea
- Joint pain

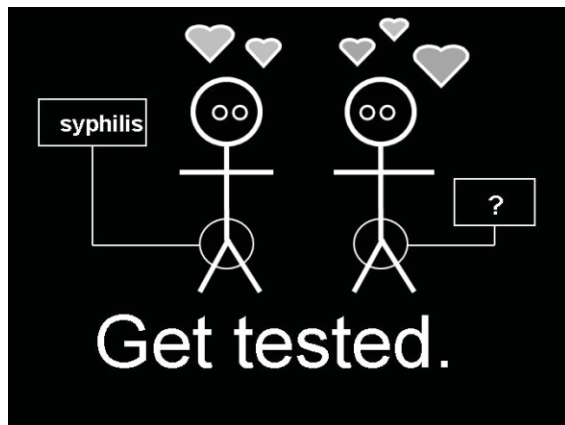
The sores heal without treatment, but the infection can continue and cause symptoms of secondary syphilis, which may appear years later, and may include: major damage to organs, tissues, or the nervous system. Pregnant women with the disease can pass it to their child before birth.

### *So, what's the good news?*

Syphilis is easy to cure if caught in early stages. You must see a doctor to be diagnosed and treated. Treatment with antibiotics is effective in killing the bacterium, but won't reverse damage already done.

### *Prevention is simple!*

Always use a condom and don't have sex with anyone who has mouth or genital sores.



*To make an appointment with a physician or to get tested contact the Student Health Center at (540) 458-8401*