



SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH

Congenital Syphilis

A risk for you and your baby

What is Congenital Syphilis (CS)?

Congenital Syphilis (CS) occurs when a syphilis infection is transmitted from a mother to her baby during pregnancy.



What should pregnant women know about CS?

All pregnant women should be tested for syphilis at least once during their pregnancy and receive treatment right away if they test positive. Most of the time, healthcare providers use a blood test to test for syphilis during the 1st prenatal visit and again near 28 weeks gestation.

Is more testing necessary for CS?

An additional test may be needed at delivery for women who live in communities with high rates of syphilis, women with HIV infection, or those who are at increased risk for syphilis exposure that can spread to her baby.

Can I prevent CS?

Yes, nearly all cases of CS are preventable. It is important to talk with your doctor about your risk of contracting syphilis before or while pregnant and if additional tests are needed. Those with syphilis may have mild to no symptoms at all. Testing is the only way to know for sure.

Can CS be treated?

Yes, CS can be treated. If your baby tests positive, they can be treated with antibiotic medication. Follow-up exams and testing of infants and

children treated for CS should be performed every 2 or 3 months until the syphilis test becomes nonreactive.

What are the risks of CS?

Congenital syphilis can have severe and potentially fatal side effects on young infants. Syphilis in pregnant women can cause harmful outcomes for her baby including:

- Stillbirth
- Prematurity
- Low birth weight
- Infant death shortly after birth

Babies born with CS may have problems with their:

- Nervous system
- Skin
- Bones
- Liver
- Lungs
- Other organs

If CS is not treated, it may cause the infant to have blindness, brain damage, or other serious problems.

Can I get syphilis again after receiving treatment?

Yes, even after successful treatment you can get syphilis again. Having syphilis once does not protect you from getting it again. Follow-up testing by a healthcare provider is necessary to make sure your treatment was successful and that you have not become infected with syphilis again.

Talk to your healthcare provider about getting tested and if you think you may have been exposed to syphilis during your pregnancy.

Learn more at
dph.sc.gov/cs