

Syphilis: Asymptomatic risk and key testing recommendations

Around half of people with syphilis are asymptomatic, with symptoms often unnoticed in areas not routinely examined.

Condoms offer partial protection (50-60% risk reduction), and transmission can also occur from mother to baby, mainly transplacentally.

The New Zealand Sexual Health Society STI Guidelines¹ recommend syphilis screening with serology history and clinical assessment for:

- routine sexual health checks
- routine first antenatal screens and later in pregnancy (third trimester)
- men who have sex with men (at least annually or with every sexual health check)
- people living with HIV (with every round of HIV bloods)
- sexual contacts of someone with syphilis.

Any positive syphilis test should be referred to or discussed with a Sexual Health Physician.

Gem reviewed by Dr Massimo Giola, Sexual Health Physician.

Reference:

1. [Syphilis](#) NZ Sexual Health Society Guideline

[Click here](#) to view more Gems

Goodfellow Gems are chosen by Goodfellow Director, Prof Bruce Arroll to be either practice changing or thought provoking. If this email was forwarded to you and you would like to automatically receive Goodfellow Gems [Click here](#).



[Tweet](#)



[Share](#)



[Forward](#)

Copyright © 2025 Goodfellow Unit, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

Goodfellow Unit
The University of Auckland | Grafton Campus
22-30 Park Ave, Grafton
Auckland, Auck 1023
New Zealand