

Syphilis

Saturday, 15 December 2007

A bacterial infection (*Treponema pallidum*) – treatment is by antibiotics.

If not treated, this disease may be lethal. Although it has been spread throughout the whole world, syphilis became less frequent with the introduction of penicillin in the 1940s. Nowadays, this disease rarely enters its third stadium. Pregnant women that carry syphilis may transmit the disease to their own child already after the 10th month of pregnancy, which could cause a miscarriage or delivery of a stillborn child.

If the child is born alive, it may develop symptoms of congenital syphilis (keratitis, ceratitis, saddle nose, brain damage). With routine checkups during pregnancy, it is a very rare occurrence. The symptoms of syphilis develop in 3 stadiums. The primary and secondary phases are both contagious within the next two years, while the third phase isn't contagious at all.

Primary stadium:

- Within 1-12 weeks after contact with the infected person
- Thick, pain free and highly infectious wound on the penis or vulva (rarely on the mouth or rectum)
- Pain free increase of lymph excrecence on the neck and groin

Secondary stadium:

- 6-24 weeks after the wound had occurred
- A rash throughout the entire body (non-itching), including palms and feet.
- Swelling of the pinkish wet spot on the sexual organs and anus
- In rare cases, unequal loss of hair
- Raised body temperature and tiredness
- Headache and muscle pain

Third stadium:

Within 10-20 years from the infection
A change of character, mental diseases, meningitis, destruction of the spinal cord (which leads to weakness and walking disruptions), aorta aneurism.

The symptoms are very serious and could cause death of the diseased. If syphilis is suspected, the practitioner takes the smear for microscopic analysis. The diagnosis for the primary and secondary syphilis can be confirmed by blood tests.

If tertiary syphilis is suspected, a tap can be done for finding the antidote against bacteria inside the licvor. Among the primary and secondary stadium, treatment with antibiotics usually leads to a complete recovery. The damage caused by tertiary syphilis can be permanent.