Congenital Syphilis

home state health.

What is it?

Congenital syphilis is when your baby is born infected with syphilis, an infection caused by a certain bacteria.

How does it happen?

It happens when a mother with untreated syphilis passes the infection to her baby during pregnancy or at birth.

Risk during pregnancy

- **Miscarriage:** Spontaneous loss of fetus before the 20th week

- **Low birth weight:** A birth weight less than 5 pounds, 5 ounces.

- **Premature Birth:** If your baby is born before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

- **Issues with the placenta and the umbilical cord:** Your placenta gives your baby food and oxygen through the umbilical cord. It grows in your uterus. Congenital syphilis might make your placenta grow too large and cause the umbilical cord to become swollen. If this happens, your placenta and umbilical cord may not support your baby properly.

- **Stillbirth:** A loss after the 20th week of pregnancy.

Risk to the baby

- **Anemia:** This condition happens when your baby doesn't have enough healthy red blood cells to carry oxygen through their entire body.

- **Jaundice:** This occurs when the baby has a buildup of bilirubin in the skin and will cause your baby's skin and eyes to be yellow in color.

- **Liver problems:** Baby's liver becomes swollen

- **Brain and nerve problems**

- **Blindness and deafness**

- **Skin rashes:** Your baby may show a rash on their mouth, genitals, bottom, the soles of their feet, or their hands and face.

HomeStateHealth.com

How do doctors diagnose congenital syphilis?

During prenatal care visits, your doctor will do blood tests to check for sexually transmitted diseases, like syphilis. If they find that you have syphilis, you need to tell your baby's doctor about all treatments you've had during your pregnancy.

Doctors can use many different tests to check your baby for congenital syphilis. These include:

- A physical exam
- Blood tests
- An eye exam to look at your baby's vision
- An X-ray
- An ultrasound
- A spinal tap (or lumber puncture) to test your baby's cerebrospinal fluid (fluid in the brain and spinal cord) of their feet, or their hands and face.

How is it Treated?

The amount of treatment your baby gets depends on the infection and condition. If your baby has congenital syphilis, the provider treats the baby with an antibiotic called penicillin. An antibiotic is a medicine that kills certain infections.

For some babies, congenital syphilis can be completely cured. For others, they may need treatment for health conditions caused by the infection. If your baby has congenital syphilis, it's important that he or she gets treatment right away to help prevent complications.

What can you do to prevent congenital syphilis?

- Practice safe sex or abstain from sex.
- Get tested
- Ask your partner to get tested.
- Go to all your prenatal care visits.
- Openly talk with your provider
- Follow treatment regimen if positive for syphilis

If you would like to receive additional information on congenital syphilis or have any other pregnancy concerns, please reach out to your Home State Health/Show Me Healthy Kids Care Management teams, we are happy to help!