

SPOTLIGHT:

Syphilis in Canada 2011-2020



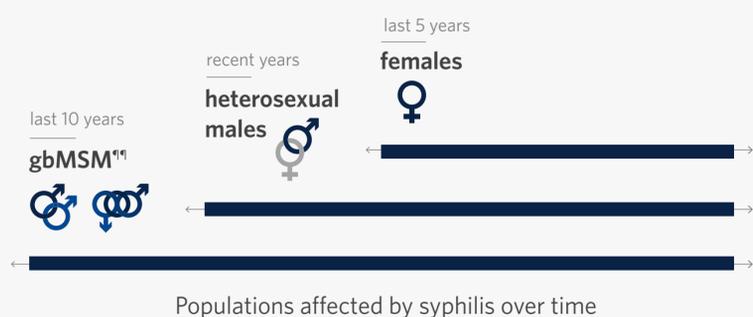
The Great Imitator

Syphilis is known as “the great imitator” because its clinical presentation can closely resemble a variety of other infections or conditions

Who does it affect?

Adults (infectious syphilis)

The proportion of infections among females and heterosexual males has increased in more recent years



**gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men

Children (congenital syphilis)



Neonates

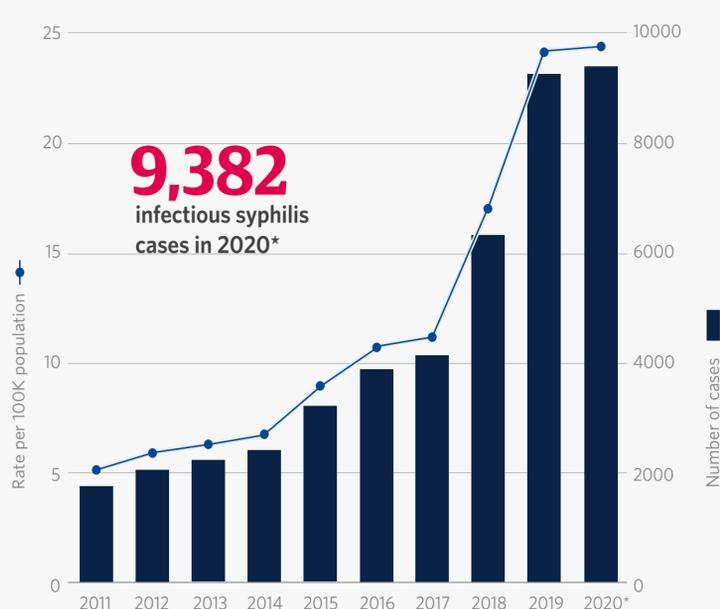
Vertical transmission of syphilis can occur at any time during pregnancy or delivery.

Neonates born with congenital syphilis may manifest signs of infection as early as birth or at any point during childhood.

How many people does it affect?

Adults

Number and rate of infectious syphilis† cases

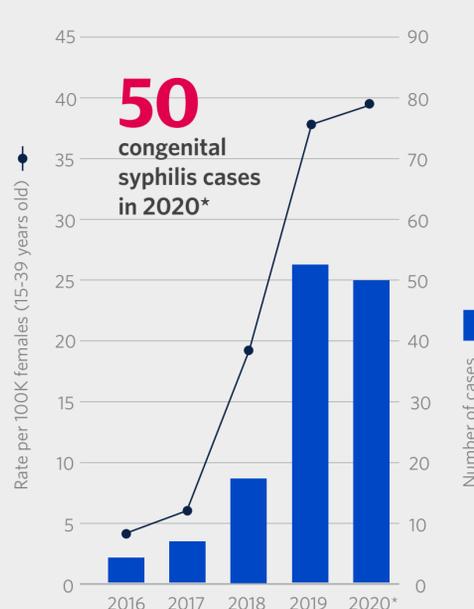


*All 2020 data is preliminary. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a decreased demand for, and ability to provide, services related to STBIs, including screening. This may have had an impact on the diagnosis rates of infectious syphilis in 2020.

†Infectious syphilis includes the primary, secondary, and early latent (less than one year after infection) stages of infection

Children

Number of congenital syphilis cases vs. infectious syphilis† rates in females



50 congenital syphilis cases in 2020*

Congenital syphilis has increased alongside the rates of infectious syphilis in females aged 15-39 years

What are the signs and symptoms?

Adults



These common signs and symptoms are not exhaustive. For more information, please visit the [Syphilis guide: Risk factors and clinical manifestations](#).

Children

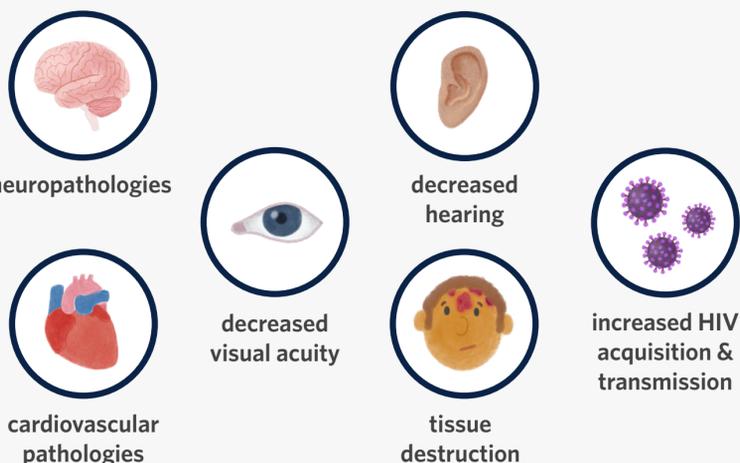


2/3 of infections may be asymptomatic

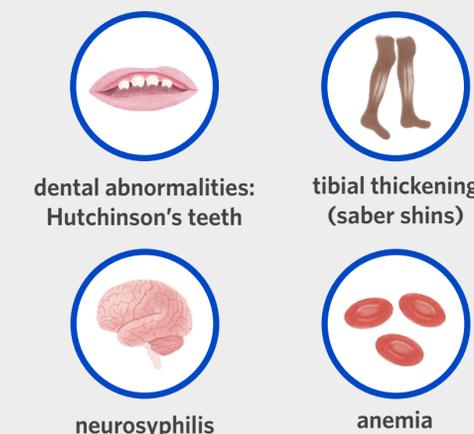
*Early congenital syphilis refers to clinical manifestations occurring in children under 2 years of age

What are the associated health outcomes?⁵

Adults



Children (late congenital syphilis††)



††Late congenital syphilis refers to clinical manifestations occurring in children over 2 years of age

What can we do?

Routine screening

Once detected, syphilis is curable, which makes detection through routine screening essential. Every encounter is an opportunity to screen for and prevent syphilis.



References

1. Syphilis. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/syphilis.html>
2. Surveillance: Rising syphilis rates in Canada, 2011-2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/reports-publications/canada-communicable-disease-report-ccdr/monthly-issue/2022-48/issue-2-3-february-march-2022/syphilis-canada-2011-2020.html>
3. Syphilis in Canada: Technical report on epidemiological trends, determinants and interventions. <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/publications/diseases-conditions/syphilis-epidemiological-report.html#14>
4. Syphilis guide: Risk factors and clinical manifestation. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/sexual-health-sexually-transmitted-infections/canadian-guidelines/syphilis/risk-factors-clinical-manifestation.html>
5. Responding to Syphilis in Canada (fact sheet). <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/responding-syphilis-canada-fact-sheet.html>

Course material for: Sexually Transmitted and Blood-borne Infections: Barriers to Screening
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