

Syphilis Point-of-Care (POC) Testing Scripts



A syphilis test is recommended based on risk-based sexual history criteria, or on county-level syphilis rates

We are currently testing everyone for syphilis due to the high rates in our community. To make sure we use the correct test, can you tell me if you have ever had syphilis in the past?

- If “yes,” ask location, date/year, and medication received.
 - Do **not** perform point-of-care testing as result will be positive for life in 85% of people.
 - **Order laboratory serum blood syphilis testing with the traditional or reverse algorithm.**
- If “no,” perform point of care syphilis testing.
- If “unsure,” ask if they ever received two penicillin injections in the hip. If they cannot remember, treat same day and perform point-of-care screening in the clinic. If positive, treat same day and send confirmation to laboratory.

Result: Non-reactive

Today, your syphilis test came back negative, which probably means you don't have syphilis. But if you recently had sex with someone who has syphilis, it might be too soon for the test to show it. Have you had sex with anyone who might have syphilis in the last three weeks?

- If “yes”, offer 3 week return appointment for repeat POC testing **or** offer serum blood testing today.
- If “no”, return to routine screening based on risk status and/or geography.

Result: Reactive

Your syphilis test result today is positive. This could mean you have syphilis now, had it before, or it might be a false positive. We suggest treating you today with [penicillin, doxycycline] and sending a blood sample to the lab for more tests. Before we take your blood and give you medicine, do you have any questions?

- Treat same-day (penicillin G benzathine {Bicillin L-A®} or Doxycycline for non-pregnant persons).
- Offer a 1-week return appointment to discuss laboratory results.
- Lab's result: If “reactive”, stage and determine recommended treatment based on stage.
- Follow up appointment: Explain the results of the serum blood test.
 - **Early syphilis:** Explain the initial dose of antibiotics was all that is needed.
 - **Late syphilis or unknown duration:** Administer the next dose and schedule an appointment for completion.

- **False positive:** Rarely POC testing has a false positive. Blood can be sent to lab to confirm test.
- **Past syphilis infection:** Explain the test performed in the clinic will show positive if they have ever had syphilis.
 - This does not mean it is an active infection. Consult local health department for record search to determine if they were adequately treated in past.
 - If they were adequately treated according to the stage, and there is not a 4-fold increase in titer, then no further treatment is needed at this time.
- If pregnant, explain penicillin is the only treatment that treats the fetus.
 - If allergic, arrange for immediate penicillin desensitization and treatment.
 - If three doses are indicated, doses must be given between 6-9 days apart or the series must be restarted.
- Recommend condom use for each sex act until both patient and partner(s) have been treated for a full two weeks.
- Verify method of contact and contact information.
- Offer clinic contact information if questions arise before next appointment.

Partner Testing and Treatment:

- Refer to your state health department on partner guidelines for testing and treatment.
- CDC Guidelines for partner testing and treatment: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/syphilis.htm>.

NOTE: *If a patient is not a candidate for POC testing, order serum blood testing through the laboratory using either the traditional or reverse algorithm.*