babies will get CS, but it is more likely to happen in the following situations:

- When the pregnant woman receives no antibiotic treatment
- When the pregnant woman is treated with an antibiotic other than penicillin (e.g. if she is allergic to penicillin)
- When the woman’s treatment is completed less than 30 days before the birth of her baby

**How will we know if my baby has congenital syphilis?**

A doctor specialising in the care of new born babies (a paediatrician) will examine your baby soon after she/he is born to check for signs of syphilis infection. Your baby will also have syphilis blood tests.

**Will my baby need treatment?**

Some babies do need treatment, but this is not always the case. The doctors looking after you and your baby will decide whether it needs antibiotics. If your baby does need treatment he or she will need to stay in hospital for 10 days of antibiotic treatment given through a cannula (or drip) placed in a vein.

**What about my partner?**

As syphilis is an STI, it is important that your sexual partner is tested for syphilis and other STIs. If you have had other sexual partners in the past, some of these may also need testing. The doctor will advise you about this.

**When can I have sex again?**

You must not have sex again until you and your partner have been treated. The doctor will advise you when it is safe.

**What happens if my syphilis is not treated?**

If syphilis is not treated there is a risk of damage to the nervous system (the brain, spinal cord and nerves) and also the heart. These complications usually take many years to develop and are seen very rarely in this country because treatment is so effective.

**How will I know I have been cured of syphilis?**

This is shown by blood tests which are taken after you have completed treatment. Your doctor will explain this to you.

**Can I catch syphilis again?**

Yes you can. Having syphilis once gives no protection in future. To prevent this it is important that your partner has blood tests. Should your partner test positive, it is important that you do not have sex until you have both been treated.

**What about my other children?**

If you already have children, it may be necessary for them to have blood tests to see if they were infected when you were pregnant with them. Your doctor will advise you about this.

**Will my family doctor know about my syphilis?**

Yes. It is important for your family doctor to know as she/he is responsible for the future care of you and your baby.

*This leaflet is produced by the Clinical Effectiveness Group of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH). Contents are based on information in the UK National Guideline on the Management of Syphilis 2015.*

*More information: www.bashh.org/guidelines*
Symptoms may occur as early as a week after infection, but sometimes it takes many months before the person notices a problem.

How do I get tested for syphilis?
The test is done on a blood sample. The doctor or nurse will advise you about this.

How is syphilis treated?
Syphilis is curable and easy to treat with the antibiotic penicillin, usually given by injection into the muscle of your buttock. The number of injections you need depends on how long you have been infected and how many weeks pregnant you are when treatment is started. If you are allergic to penicillin, you will be given a different antibiotic.

Can syphilis affect my pregnancy?
Yes. Miscarriages or stillbirths are more likely to happen if you are not treated or you receive treatment late in pregnancy. However, having syphilis does not mean that you need a caesarean section. You can still breast-feed your baby once you have completed your treatment.

Can syphilis affect my baby?
Yes. Syphilis infection can spread from a mother to her unborn child. This is known as congenital syphilis (CS). Some babies with CS look completely normal at birth and the diagnosis is only made by doing a test on a sample of the baby’s blood. Some babies with CS have damaged bones and teeth or problems with their sight or hearing. Treating syphilis as early as possible in pregnancy gives the best chance of preventing babies from being infected.

What chance is there of a baby having congenital syphilis?
CS is rare in the UK, with only about 10 cases diagnosed each year. It’s not easy to predict which