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Syphilis

Patient name: _____ Admission: _____

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- I. **The client/caregiver can define the disease syphilis.**
 - A. It is a sexually transmitted disease caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*.
 - B. It is passed from person to person through direct contact with a syphilis sore.
 - C. These sores occur on the external genitals, vagina, and anus, or in the rectum. They can also occur on the lips and in the mouth.
 - D. Transmission occurs during sex. Infected pregnant women can pass it to the unborn child.
 - E. Syphilis is described in three stages.

- II. **The client/caregiver can explain stages of syphilis and symptoms for each stage.**
 - A. First stage of syphilis
 - The first symptom is usually a sore (or chancre).
 - The chancre is firm, round, small, and painless.
 - The first symptom occurs from 10 to 90 days after infection.
 - The chancre can last 3 to 6 weeks and can heal without treatment.
 - Without treatment, disease will progress to stage 2.
 - B. Second stage of syphilis
 - Rash can occur on one or more areas of the body.
 - Rash does not usually cause itching.
 - Rash may appear as the chancre is healing or several weeks afterward.
 - Most common appearance of rash is a rough, red, or reddish brown spots on palms of hands and bottom of feet.
 - Other symptoms may be fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches, and fatigue.

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- These symptoms can pass without treatment, but the disease will progress to the third stage.
- C. Late stage of syphilis
 - This is also called latent (hidden) stage.
 - It will start when second-stage symptoms disappear.
 - Infection remains in the body, if not treated.
 - There is damage to brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints.
 - Complications if untreated can result in mental deterioration, dementia, loss of vision, loss of balance, and paralysis.
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- III. **The client/caregiver can list method of testing and treatment.**
 - A. Testing for syphilis can be done by culture of chancre or by an inexpensive blood test (VDRL or RPR).
 - B. Treatment by penicillin injection at any stage can cure the disease, but cannot repair damage done to organs before treatment.
 - C. HIV testing is recommended.
 - D. Partner should be notified and screening done.

RESOURCES

Community Health Clinic

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/std/

Healthy People 2010
www.health.gov/healthypeople

(Continued)

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