

Donald Trump Syphilis Rumors: Doctors Weigh In

Published Jan 19, 2024 at 11:22 AM EST

Updated Jan 20, 2024 at 4:47 PM EST



By [Tom Norton](#)

FOLLOW

154

Donald Trump faced fresh speculation about the state of his health this week after a photo showed his hands covered in red marks, a sign that some claimed was a symptom of syphilis, a sexually transmitted infection.

Former President Trump was pictured with marks on his right hand, finger and thumb as he left Trump Tower, Manhattan on Wednesday, January 17, heading to court, facing a second accusation of defamation from writer [E. Jean Carroll](#), after he had previously been found liable for sexually abusing her at a New York City department store in the mid-1990s.



against him, in New York City on January 17, 2024. This photo, showing several red patches on Trump's hand,...

[More](#) CHARLY TRIBALLEAU/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

[In a video blog for Politicon](#), Democratic political consultant James Carville said a "number of MDs" had confirmed to him the marks were a sign of "secondary syphilis."

"They don't look like cuts to me. They look like sores," Carville said. "And I asked a number of MDs what medical condition manifests itself through hand sores and the answer is immediate and unanimous: secondary syphilis."

"All right, I think I think there's a good chance this man has 'the clap' and I'm not being particularly secretive about it."

The claims led to widespread speculation, with #SyphilisDon trending on X, formerly [Twitter](#). However, doctors who spoke with *Newsweek* said there was not enough information to make such a diagnosis.



The Bulletin

NEWSLETTER

Your Morning Starts Here

Begin your day with a curated outlook of top news around the world and why it matters.

Enter your email address

SIGN ME UP

I want to receive special offers and promotions from Newsweek

By clicking on SIGN ME UP, you agree to Newsweek's [Terms of Use](#) & [Privacy Policy](#).

You may unsubscribe at any time.

Trump's health has been a topic of rife speculation for years now, although often relying on anonymous sources, former associates, or scrutinizing film footage.

Newsweek

SUBSCRIBE FOR \$1

although some physicians questioned why the report did not include specific test results or metrics on key health indicators.

Trump has given no explanation for the marks. *Newsweek* contacted media representatives for [Trump](#) via email on Thursday.

**Newsweek****VOICES****Exclusively Available to Subscribers**

Try it now for \$1

READ MORE

- Donald Trump ally wins critical vote amid Michigan Republican revolt
- Marjorie Taylor Greene uses Zelensky's own speech to reject Ukraine aid
- Legal analyst warns of critical "problem" with Hunter Biden's lawyer
- Mike Lindell thinks Donald Trump's opponents are "very scared"

What Is Syphilis?

Syphilis will usually develop in several stages, known as the primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary stages, with each stage having different symptoms.

The first to appear are usually chancres, or small, painless sores or [ulcers, often in or around the genitals](#), or in the mouth, that develop between two and six weeks after exposure. In the secondary stage, a blotchy red rash may appear, often on hands or feet, as well as small skin growths, white patches in the mouth, fatigue, headaches, joint pain, fever and swollen glands.

after a short time and the disease then moves into its latent stage, where there also may be no symptoms at all.

The latent stage can last several years before developing into tertiary syphilis which can cause substantial damage to the heart, eyes, brain, and wider nervous system.

The prominence of syphilis has slowed in the past century. Syphilis can now be easily treated with penicillin and recent research published in the journal *Sexually Transmitted Diseases* shows that in the U.S. deaths from the disease plummeted from thousands in the late 1960s to a few dozen by 2015.

However [CDC research published in 2022](#) showed congenital cases in the U.S. had increased by 755 percent between 2012 and 2021.

Doctors Address Donald Trump Syphilis Rumor

Newsweek has contacted Politicon via email to ask more about the sources Carville spoke to and for further comment.

Physicians with expertise in sexually transmitted diseases who spoke to *Newsweek* disputed the claim the photos published this week show syphilis symptoms, adding that there is too little information to make a diagnosis.

Dr. Philip Chan, an associate professor in the Department of Medicine at Brown University and medical director of a publicly-funded STD clinic in Rhode Island, told *Newsweek* that the image was "not consistent with secondary syphilis."

"So I think the truth of what's being speculated upon is that, yes, the rash on the palms of one hand is a strong indicator in people of secondary syphilis. That's very, very true. But if you look at, if you look at like pictures on the Internet, for example, you're going to see it's usually evenly spread out on the palms.

"It's usually flat. It's usually kind of like, you know, dots or you know what we would call a maculopapular rash, kind of these flat round spots.

"If you look at what Trump has on his hand, it's really isolated to one spot on his hand. And that's not, really consistent I would say with secondary syphilis."

Newsweek

SUBSCRIBE FOR \$1

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), show marks across both palms, not only the small few patches seen in Trump's recent photo.



Secondary-stage syphilis sores (lesions) on the palms of the hands, referred to as "palmar lesions." **DIVISION OF STD PREVENTION, NATIONAL CENTER FOR HIV, VIRAL HEPATITIS, STD, AND TB PREVENTION, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION**

Chan said that without a conversation and full diagnostic test, there would be no way of knowing what the marks on Trump's hand were, adding it looked like "some sort of trauma."

"You know, looking at it, it looks like maybe he grabbed something," Chan added.

"Maybe it's a burn, a hot pan, but to me, it looks a little more consistent with some sort of specific grabbing pattern and it's, you know, if you actually look at his palms, there's really not much there and it's not really consistent with what I would say is secondary syphilis."

Newsweek

SUBSCRIBE FOR \$1

(LSTM) and an infectious diseases physician who has published research on syphilis, told *Newsweek* that it looked more like a "superficial skin wound," but understood why there had been other calls.

"It can affect the tongue and the lips and so on as well. But the easiest thing to see is the rash," Mabey said.

"And you know, there are not many rashes that affect the palms of the hands, and I think that's why people are saying this must be syphilis."

Other photos published the same day as the image shared online do not show the same red marks.



Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally at the Sheraton Portsmouth Harborside Hotel on January 17, 2024 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. **CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES)**



Donald Trump speaks at a press conference at 40 Wall Street on January 17, 2024 in New York City. **ALEXI J. ROSENFELD/GETTY IMAGES**

Mabey, a former director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Sexually Transmitted Infections at LSHTM, said while a rash on the palm of a hand can be a giveaway for secondary syphilis, there would usually be more, different-looking lesions.

"They wouldn't look quite like that. They'd be more sort of little raised papules they're so-called, or sometimes you know with the skin peeling off after a day or two," Mabey said.

Dr. Patricia Kissinger, an infectious disease epidemiologist who has spent decades working on STD research and prevention, told *Newsweek* that there was no way to make a firm determination without examination.

"This could be so many things including trauma, infection, Whitlow's," Kissinger said.

"Moreover, secondary syphilis tends to be more on the palms. There are so many things it could be. I still think that it would be difficult to determine by just looking at a photo."

[View Editorial Guidelines](#)

About the writer

[Tom Norton](#)

FOLLOW

To read how Newsweek uses AI as a newsroom tool, [click here.](#)

Trending



01 **Woman Arrested For Scheme to Steal Elvis Presley's Graceland**

[8 comments](#)

3 comments

03 Ben Crump Demands Charges For Officer Who Killed US Airman Roger Fortson

3 comments

04 Disney Theme Park Expansion: Full List of New Attractions

1 comments

05 CDC Updates Mpox Map, Advises Best Vaccination, Other Protections

4 comments

[← Back To Homepage](#)

Latest Updates

Mom Praised for Why She Talks About Her Kids Behind Their Backs

Fox, ESPN and Warner Bros. Sports Streaming Venture Blocked by Judge

Suns CEO Addresses Kevin Durant's Future in Phoenix

Jennifer Lopez's Major Gesture to Ben Affleck Amid Divorce Rumors

The US Economy Is Actually Doing Well. It Might Not Help Kamala Harris

THE DEBATE

Limiting Political Participation Based on Wealth Is un-American | Opinion

By Mark R. Weaver



VS



By Jeff Clements

OPINION

Columbia University's President Shafik Won't Be Mourned or Missed | Opinion

By [Paul Du Quenoy](#)



The U.S. Has a Problem of Too Much Law. Here's How We Solve It | Opinion

By [Philip K. Howard](#)



We Need Smart Laws, Not Less Laws | Opinion

By Jefferson Adams



Republicans Must Make a Laser-Focused, Issues-Based Case to the People

By [Josh Hammer](#)



Look Who's Really Behind Pro-Palestinian Protests at the DNC | Opinion

By Naftali Balanson



I Hope Harris Wins. But Democrats Must Answer for Their Democratic Failures

By Andrew Yang



Tim Walz Is an Everyman Superman | Opinion

By Jason Altmire



Limiting Political Participation Based on Wealth Is un-American | Opinion

The 'Headline Economy' Looks Good. The Real-Life Economy Sucks | Opinion

By [Lee Habeeb](#)



We Must Build a More Diverse Medical Workforce | Opinion

By Leonardo Seoane



Students Need Tech-Free Classrooms | Opinion

By Alex Priou



Gov. Wes Moore: Tim Walz Serves America With Distinction | Opinion

By Wes Moore



Premium Subscription

Digital + Monthly

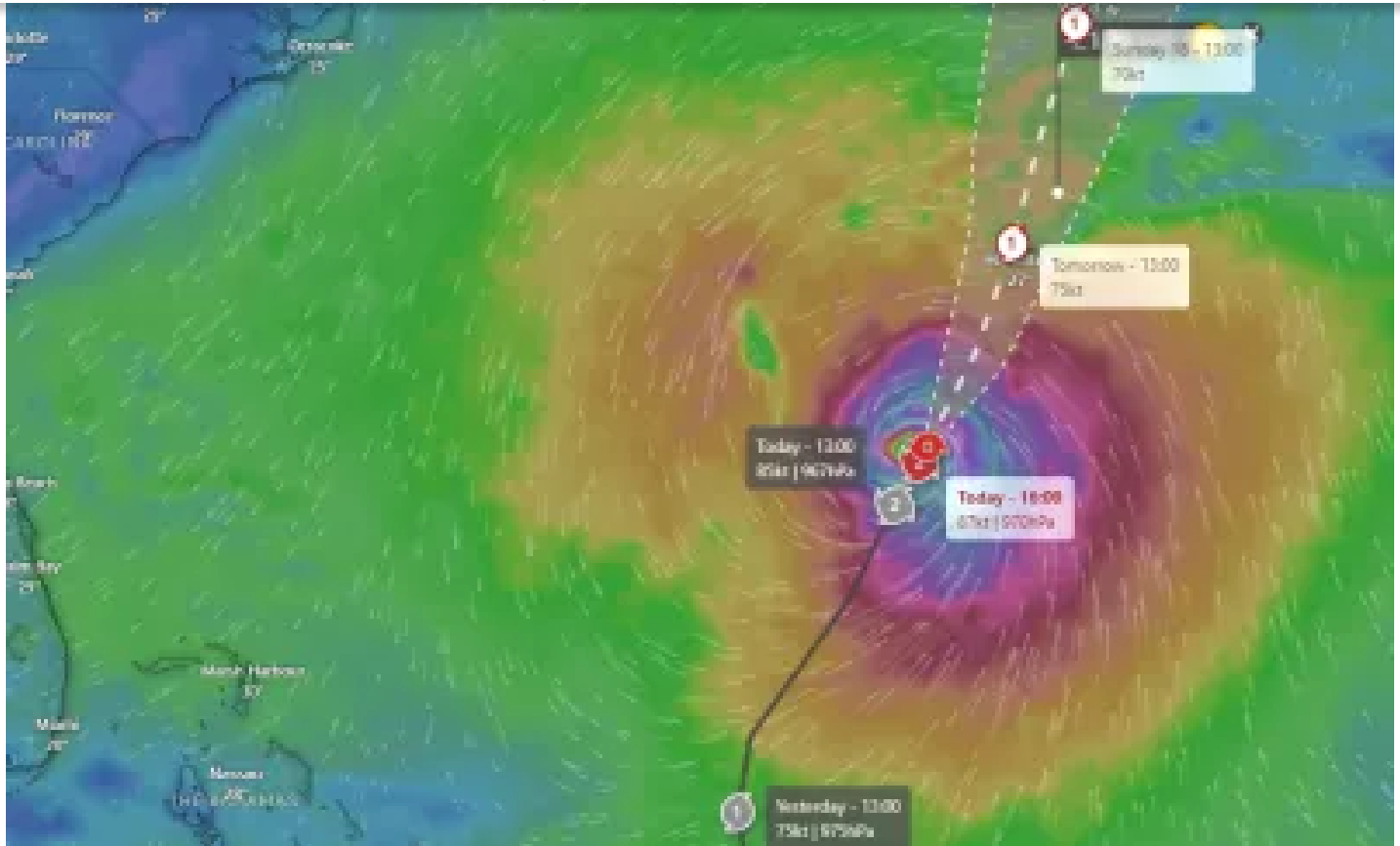


- ✓ Newsweek magazine delivered to your door
- ✓ Newsweek Voices: Diverse audio opinions
- ✓ Enjoy ad-free browsing on Newsweek.com
- ✓ Comment on articles
- ✓ Newsweek app updates on-the-go

Top Stories



Donald Trump Gets Polling Win Amid Kamala Harris Surge



Bermuda Batters Hatches as Hurricane Ernesto Barrels In: Track Storm

Newsweek

SUBSCRIBE FOR \$1



Tim Walz Target of Republican Probe Over China 'Connections'



How Kamala Harris Could Capitalize on the DNC, Analysts Suggest

[U.S.](#) >

[Science](#) >

[Rankings](#) >

[Entertainment](#) >

[My Turn](#) >

[Sports](#) >

[Better Planet](#) >

[World](#) >

[Health](#) >

[Opinion](#) >

[Fact Check](#) >

[Education](#) >

[Podcasts](#) >

[Vault](#) >

Subscriptions

Digital+ Monthly (Ad Free Trial) **\$1.00**

Digital+ Yearly \$49.00

Premium Monthly \$9.99

Premium Yearly \$99

Vantage >

Experts >

Voices >

Trending

Israel at War

Vladimir Putin

Russia-Ukraine War

Donald Trump

Newsletters in your inbox See all

- The Bulletin (Daily) [See Sample](#)
- The Gist of It (Daily)
- Geoscape (Twice a Week)
- The Josh Hammer Report (Weekly) [See Sample](#)
- For The Culture (Three Times a Week) [See Sample](#)
- Discoveries (3 Times a Week)
- Like & Subscribe (Daily)
- Breaking News (As it Breaks)
- The Debate (Twice a Week)
- Pawsitively (Daily)
- Better Planet (Weekly)
- My Turn (Weekly)
- Newsweek Pulse (2x3 Times a Month)

Email address

Sign up now

You can unsubscribe at any time. By signing up you are agreeing to our Terms of Service and Privacy Policy

In The Magazine



August 23
2024 Issue

Company

[About Us](#)

[Masthead](#)

[Diversity](#)

[Announcements](#)

[Archive](#)

[Policies and Standards](#)

[Mission Statement](#)

[Leadership](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Press Center](#)

Terms of Use

[Cookie Policy](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

[Terms of Sale](#)

[Privacy Settings](#)

Editions:

[U.S. Edition](#)

[日本](#)

[Polska](#)

[România](#)

Contact

[Advertise](#)

[Careers](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Corrections](#)