

Changes in CDC Gonorrhea Treatment Recommendations

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TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Alison V. Beam, JD, Acting Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Changes in CDC Gonorrhea Treatment Recommendations
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This transmission is a “Health Advisory” provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

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- With the ongoing threat of antibiotic resistance in Gonorrhea, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a change to the recommended treatment for Gonorrhea (www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea).
- Providers are encouraged to adopt these new CDC Gonorrhea treatment recommendations.
- Gonorrhea continues to remain a significant public health challenge in the United States and Pennsylvania. In 2020, reported Gonorrhea in Pennsylvania (exclusive of Philadelphia) increased 21% from 9,012 cases in 2019 to an estimated 10,891 cases reported in 2020.
- The estimated 10,891 cases reported in 2020 is historic, representing the highest number of cases reported in Pennsylvania (exclusive of Philadelphia) in nearly 4 decades (see Figure 1).
- Young Adults Age 15 to 30 represent a significant disproportionate number of cases, representing 63% of all reported gonorrhea cases in 2020.
- Providers are encouraged to maintain a high index of suspicion for the emergence of resistant gonorrhea by immediately reporting any suspected treatment failures to 1-877-PA-HEALTH

Reported Cases of Gonorrhea in Pennsylvania (Exclusive of Philadelphia) 1976 through 2020

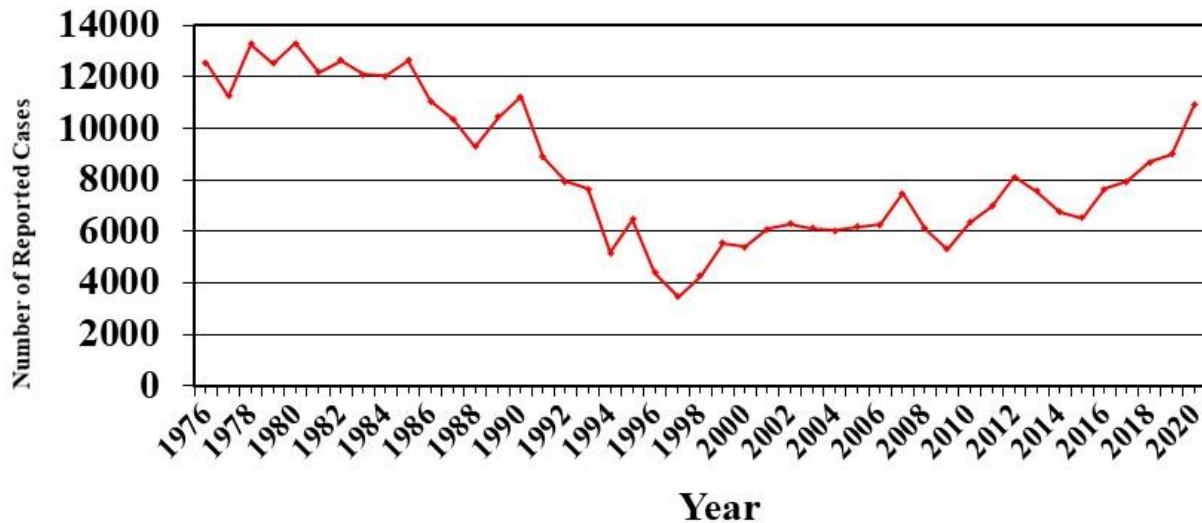


Figure 1: Pennsylvania (Exclusive of Philadelphia) Reported Cases of Gonorrhea 1976 to 2020

Testing Recommendations

The Pennsylvania Department of Health is recommending that all sexually active individuals ages 24 and younger are routinely offered screening for STD and HIV. STD testing needs to include both gonorrhea and chlamydia by a FDA-Approved **Nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT)**. Most commercial NAATs have been cleared by FDA to detect *Chlamydia Trachomatis* and *Neisseria Gonorrhoeae* in vaginal and endocervical swabs from women, urethral swabs from men, and first catch urine from both men and women.

Treatment Recommendations

Regimen for uncomplicated gonococcal infections of the cervix, urethra, or rectum:

- Ceftriaxone 500 mg IM as a single dose for persons weighing <300 pounds.
- For persons weighing ≥ 300 pounds, 1 g of IM ceftriaxone should be administered.

- If chlamydial infection has not been excluded, providers should treat for chlamydia with doxycycline 100 mg orally twice daily for 7 days.
- During pregnancy, azithromycin 1 g as a single dose is recommended to treat chlamydia.

Alternative regimens for uncomplicated gonococcal infections of the cervix, urethra, or rectum if ceftriaxone is not available:

- Gentamicin 240 mg IM as a single dose plus azithromycin 2 g orally as a single dose, **OR**
- Cefixime 800 mg orally as a single dose. If treating with cefixime, and chlamydial infection has not been excluded, providers should treat for chlamydia with doxycycline 100 mg orally twice daily for 7 days. During pregnancy, azithromycin 1 g as a single dose is recommended to treat chlamydia.

Recommended regimen for uncomplicated gonococcal infections of the pharynx:

- Ceftriaxone 500 mg IM as a single dose for persons weighing <300 pounds.
- For persons weighing ≥300 pounds, 1 g of IM ceftriaxone should be administered.
- If chlamydia coinfection is identified when pharyngeal gonorrhea testing is performed, providers should treat for chlamydia with doxycycline 100 mg orally twice a day for 7 days.
- During pregnancy, azithromycin 1 g as a single dose is recommended to treat chlamydia.
- No reliable alternative treatments are available for pharyngeal gonorrhea. For persons with a history of a beta-lactam allergy, a thorough assessment of the reaction is recommended.
- For persons with an anaphylactic or other severe reaction to ceftriaxone, consult an infectious disease specialist for an alternative treatment recommendation.

Other Recommendations

In addition to the CDC recommended treatment for uncomplicated gonorrhea, the Department is recommending the following:

1. Providers statewide are strongly encouraged to ask patients about their sexual practices and to offer, when indicated, throat and rectal cultures.
2. A test of cure by culture is **strongly recommended** for any patient with persistent symptoms after therapy with Ceftriaxone.
3. All gonorrhea positive cultures should be tested for drug resistance, including Ceftriaxone resistance.
4. The Department maintains a network of STD clinical sites that have gonorrhea culture testing capabilities and laboratory support for the performance of antibiotic resistance testing. All STD

services offered at these sites are free and confidential. If resistance is suspected, please call the number below for additional information and for assistance in making appropriate referrals.

Management of Sex Partners

Effective clinical management of patients with treatable STDs requires treatment of the patient's recent sex partners to prevent reinfection and curtail further transmission. Patients should be instructed to refer their sex partners for evaluation and treatment. Sex partners of patients with gonorrhea infection whose last sexual contact with the patient was within 60 days before onset of symptoms or diagnosis of infection in those patients should be evaluated and treated for gonorrhea and chlamydia trachomatis infections. If a patient's last sexual intercourse was >60 days before onset of symptoms or diagnosis, the patient's most recent sex partner should be treated. Patients should be instructed to avoid all sexual activity until therapy is completed and until they and their sex partners no longer have symptoms.

Additional Information

Physicians needing additional information are asked to call the following number:

Pennsylvania Department of Health
Bureau of Communicable Diseases
Division of TB/STD
STD Program
(717) 787-3981
8:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M

Additional Web Links

Additional information on gonorrhea testing and treatment can be found online at:

www.cdc.gov/std/treatment

If you have questions about this guidance, please call the health department 1-877-PA-HEALTH

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Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

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This information is current as of January 29, 2021 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.