

Increases in Reported Syphilis Centre County

DATE:	March 24, 2022
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Keara Klinepeter, MSHCPM, Acting Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Increases in Reported Syphilis Centre County
DISTRIBUTION:	Centre County
LOCATION:	Centre County
STREET ADDRESS:	Centre County
COUNTY:	Centre County
MUNICIPALITY:	Centre County
ZIP CODE:	Centre County

This transmission is a “Health Advisory” provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY

Summary

- Centre County reported a 300% increase in Early Syphilis from 3 cases in CY 2020 to 12 cases in CY 2021
- Of the 12 cases of Early Syphilis reported, the following was noted:
 - 58% reported a previous STD infection prior to their reported syphilis infections such as previous gonorrhea or chlamydia infection.
 - All the cases reported in CY 2021 were reported in males.
 - A high proportion of the male cases (83%) reported the risk factor of men who have sex with men; however, these cases also reported heterosexual partners as well.
- In addition to the reported 300% increase in Early Syphilis, Centre County also reported a 11% increase in gonorrhea from 54 cases reported in CY 2020 to 60 cases reported in 2021.
- Of the 60 gonorrhea cases reported in CY 2021, the following was noted:
 - 83% of the cases were reported in individuals under age 30.
 - 48% were reported in females.
- In response to the increase in syphilis, providers are strongly encouraged to expand syphilis and HIV testing in the community to include all individuals being treated for a chlamydia or gonorrhea infection.

Testing Recommendations

In response to the recent increase in Early Syphilis in Centre County, the PADOH is recommending the following:

1. All patients with a recent positive test for another sexually transmitted disease such as gonorrhea or chlamydia need to be tested for syphilis and HIV.
2. All patients presenting with any of the following symptoms or conditions should be tested for syphilis:
 - A macular and/or papular rash on the palms of the hands or on the soles of the feet
 - A generalized rash that may be macular, papular, or papulosquamous on the back, chest, or stomach
 - A lesion in the genital, rectal, or oral area
 - Moist papules in the anogenital region or the mouth
 - Sudden “Moth-eaten” scalp alopecia with a typical onset at the back of the head
 - Loss of eyelashes and the lateral third of the eyebrows
 - Generalized lymphadenopathy
 - Malaise
3. All pregnant patients be offered a test for syphilis at the following intervals:
 - At the first prenatal visit
 - At the third trimester of pregnancy
 - At the delivery of a child, or
 - At the delivery of a stillborn child

Treatment Recommendations

1. Primary, secondary, and early latent: adults (including pregnant individuals and people with HIV infection) benzathine penicillin G 2.4 million units IM in a single dose.
2. Late latent: adults (including pregnant individuals and people with HIV infection) benzathine penicillin G 7.2 million units total, administered as 3 doses of 2.4 million units IM each at 1-week intervals.
3. Parenteral Benzathine penicillin G is the only therapy with documented efficacy for syphilis during pregnancy. Pregnant patients with syphilis in any stage who report penicillin allergy should be desensitized and treated with Benzathine penicillin G.
4. Due to the recent changes in health care delivery, some providers have not been able to obtain cost-effective access to Benzathine penicillin G for their at-risk pregnant clients. In these situations, providers are strongly encouraged to contact the Pennsylvania Department of Health for treatment assistance.

Management of Sex Partners

Effective clinical management of patients with treatable STIs 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.

1. Persons who have had sexual contact with a person who receives a diagnosis of primary, secondary, or early latent syphilis <90 days before the diagnosis should be treated presumptively for early syphilis, even if serologic test results are negative or unknown.

2. Persons who have had sexual contact with a person who receives a diagnosis of primary, secondary, or early latent syphilis >90 days before the diagnosis should be treated presumptively for early syphilis if serologic test results are not immediately available and the opportunity for follow-up is uncertain. If serologic tests are negative, no treatment is needed. If serologic tests are positive, treatment should be based on clinical and serologic evaluation and syphilis stage.
3. Long-term sex partners of persons who have late latent syphilis should be evaluated clinically and serologically for syphilis and treated based on the findings.

Offering At-risk Clients Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV

Providers are encouraged to discuss the benefits of PrEP to all at-risk clients who test negative for HIV, and report any of the following risk factors:

1. If the client has had anal or vaginal sex in the past 6 months and reports having a sexual partner with HIV (especially if the partner has an unknown or detectable viral load).
2. The client has not consistently used a condom and reports having sex with multiple partners.
3. The client has been diagnosed with an STI in the past 6 months.
4. The client has reported having an injection partner with HIV, share needles, syringes, or other equipment to inject drugs.

Reporting Requirements

The Department of Health requires all providers and laboratories to perform electronic reporting of all diseases, infections and conditions listed in 28 Pa. Code Chapter 27, Subchapter B (relating to reporting of diseases, infections, and conditions) through its electronic disease surveillance system, PA-NEDSS. Providers are reminded that these reporting requirements expect providers to report diagnosis and treatments for positive STD cases. Providers not registered for PA-NEDSS can do so by contacting the PA-NEDSS Security Officer by email at RA-DHNESSACCTREQ@pa.gov or by phone at 717-783-9171.

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 syphilis testing and treatment for pregnant patients can be found online at: www.cdc.gov/std/treatment

Categories of Health Alert messages:

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

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of March 24,2022 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.