

Increases in Reported Syphilis Delaware County

DATE:	October 4, 2021
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Alison Beam, JD, Acting Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	Increases in Reported Syphilis Delaware County
DISTRIBUTION:	Delaware County
LOCATION:	Delaware County
STREET ADDRESS:	Delaware County
COUNTY:	Delaware County
MUNICIPALITY:	Delaware County
ZIP CODE:	Delaware 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

- As of the first half of 2021, Delaware County has reported 104 Early Syphilis (primary, secondary, or early latent syphilis) cases which has exceeded the total reported number of Early Syphilis for all of CY 2020.
- Based on current trends, reported Early Syphilis for CY 2021 is on track to exceed 210 cases, which will represent a 104% increase from CY 2020.
- Females are projected to report 50 cases of Early Syphilis by the end of CY 2021, which will represent a 178% increase over the 18 cases reported in CY 2020.
- Of these female Early Syphilis cases reported in the first half of CY 2021, women of child-bearing age (ages 15 to 44) represented 84% of the cases.
- The projected 210 cases of Early Syphilis for CY 2021 would represent the highest number of cases reported in the county in 20 years.
- Due to the significant increase in syphilis in Delaware County, PADOH is recommending pregnant females receive testing for syphilis at the first prenatal visit, third trimester of pregnancy, and at delivery.
- In CY 2020, Pennsylvania (exclusive of Philadelphia) reported 8 congenital syphilis cases, this represents the highest number of congenital syphilis cases in more than 25 years.
- All individuals treated for chlamydia and/or a gonorrhea infection need to be tested for syphilis and HIV.
- If you have any questions, please call PA DOH at 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) or your local health department.

Testing Recommendations

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

1. All pregnant females 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
2. 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.
3. 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

Treatment Recommendations

1. Primary, secondary, and early latent: adults (including pregnant women and people with HIV infection) benzathine penicillin G 2.4 million units IM in a single dose.
2. Late latent adults (including pregnant women 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 women 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

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.

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 women 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 October 4, 2021 but may be modified in the future. We will continue to post updated information regarding the most common questions about this subject.