



## PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT: Syphilis Outbreak Columbus

September 1, 2015

From Columbus Public Health

### What you need to know

Early syphilis cases continue to increase in Franklin County. Infectious early syphilis (ES) cases have increased by 50% comparing January - June of 2014 to January - June of 2015. There have been more than 200 cases reported in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2015.

- **It is anticipated that by the end of 2015, data will reflect a rate increase of more than 83% since 2013.**
- Most cases are being diagnosed in men who have sex with men.
- A staggering increase among females has resulted in treatment of several pregnant woman and **8 cases of congenital syphilis during 2014 and 3 cases already in 2015.** Congenital syphilis is often severe, disabling, and life-threatening.

### What to watch for

Symptoms of ES are often missed or misdiagnosed and can include:

- Cutaneous lesion(s) - often painless ulcers, on genitals, anus/rectum or in/around the mouth
- Maculopapular rash - genital, body, palms of the hands/soles of feet, scalp, face
- Condylomata lata - raised and moist wart-like lesions in groin and perianal area, swollen lymph glands and fever
- Meningitis, cranial neuropathies, uveitis/optic neuritis, sensorineural hearing loss and tinnitus

### What you can do

1. **Increase screening:** Refer to screening recommendations table. Persons of negative or unknown HIV status should also be screened for HIV.
2. **Report Cases:** Syphilis is a Class B (1) reportable condition which is required to be reported by the end of the next business day. Submit reports via the Infectious Disease Reporting System (IDRS) faxed to (614) 525-8890 or call (614) 525-8888.
3. **Assist with Access to Treatment:** If a patient needs assistance accessing treatment, Columbus Public Health offers treatment on a sliding fee scale and no one is turned away for inability to pay. Medication can be delivered to your practice when needed.

### Screening Recommendations

Per CDC's recommendations<sup>1</sup> to base frequency of screening on individual risk behaviors and local epidemiology, CPH screening recommendations are as follows:

Population	Recommended Screening
All pregnant woman	At initial prenatal visit, at 28-32 weeks, and at delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More often for high risk* patients</li> <li>• Stillborn delivery &gt;20 weeks gestation</li> </ul>
All HIV positive patients	Every 6 months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every 3 months for high risk* patients</li> </ul>
All men having sex with men	Every 6 months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every 3 months for high risk* patients</li> </ul>
All patients presenting with STI-related complaints	At time of visit
All patients reporting unprotected sex with casual or anonymous partners	At time of visit
All sex partners	At time of visit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners ≤ 90 days should be treated preventively regardless of test result</li> </ul>

\*High risk defined as illicit drug users, multiple and/or anonymous sex partners or for whom risk level is unknown.

### To learn more

#### <sup>1</sup>CDC STD Treatment Guidelines

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2015 STD Treatment Guidelines along with a quick reference guide phone application can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/default.htm>.

#### Questions/Comments

If you have any questions or comments, please call the HIV/STD Prevention Program at 645-8539.

#### Contact us

240 Parsons Ave, Columbus OH 43215  
Phone: 614.645.7417 (main number)  
E-mail: [health@columbus.gov](mailto:health@columbus.gov)