



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Public Health • Epidemiology Section
Communicable Disease Branch

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Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor
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Jeffrey P. Engel, M.D.
State Health Director

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

To: Local Health Directors, Private Physicians, Hospital Administrators, NC OB/GYN Providers, Ryan White Care Providers, Substance Abuse Agencies, Laboratory Directors, State and County Correctional Nursing Administrators, NC Infectious Disease Providers and NC Emergency Departments

From: Evelyn Foust, MPH, Communicable Disease Branch Head
Peter Boone, MD, Medical Director for HIV/STD Program

Re: Increase in Early Syphilis Statewide

Syphilis cases are steadily rising across North Carolina. From January 1-July 17, 2009, there were 477 new reported cases of syphilis; compared to 277 cases for the same time period last year. Two hundred eighty-seven of the 477 new cases of syphilis were diagnosed in the primary and secondary infectious stages of the disease. We are asking all medical providers to take a more proactive approach to diagnosing and treating syphilis in order to reverse the current trends. Please consider the following management guidelines and reporting laws:

1. When evaluating a patient with a suspected case of syphilis or other STD, complete a full history and physical for signs and symptoms, including oral and anal exams.
2. Report all early cases within 24 hours to the County Health Department.
3. Proactively treat cases and/or partners and other high-risk individuals if symptoms of syphilis are present and do not wait for confirmatory testing. We recommend proceeding with treatment of 2.4 million units of penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A), if the patient is not allergic to penicillin. Pregnant women who are allergic to Bicillin L-A should be desensitized and treated with penicillin.
4. If you do not have Bicillin readily available in your practice, you can refer the patient to your local health department for necessary treatment and/or call your local State Regional DIS Office. They can deliver the Bicillin to your office. (See attached Regional Office listing)
5. If you test for syphilis, test for HIV. If you test for HIV, test for syphilis.
6. Visit our website www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dph for up-to-date STD and other public health information.
7. Take advantage of Public Health Services:

Providers can call (919) 733- 7301 Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. to access:

- Expert medical consultation on any aspect of the diagnosis, treatment, management, or prevention of any sexually transmitted disease.
- Hours and location of free, public STD clinics in any county in North Carolina.
- Partner notification assistance.

Your timely and accurate reporting can help to **eliminate syphilis in North Carolina.**



North Carolina Public Health
Working for a healthier and safer North Carolina
Everywhere. Everyday. Everybody.



Location: 225 N. McDowell Street • Raleigh, N.C. 27603