

August 7, 2008

PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

Dear Provider,

The Columbus community is experiencing a significant increase in syphilis cases. As of June 30, 2008, there were 89 cases of primary, secondary and early latent syphilis cases reported in Franklin County. In 2007, 108 cases were reported for the entire year. For the first time in several years, we also have a confirmed case of congenital syphilis.

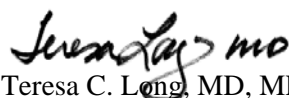
Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease caused by *Treponema pallidum* that can be spread from person to person by physical contact during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Syphilis infections are curable and treatable when diagnosed and treated early with antibiotics.

Due to the increase in syphilis cases, Columbus Public Health is recommending the following practices be adhered to in an effort to reduce the number of future cases. The recommendations are based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2006 STD Treatment Guidelines which can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/default.htm>.

- All pregnant women should have a screening RPR obtained at **initial intake and again at 28 weeks gestation**. A third RPR should be drawn if the provider feels the patient is high risk. Any woman who delivers without prenatal care needs to have an RPR drawn at delivery. (*see page #7 of CDC guidelines*)
- All HIV positive patients (whether or not they report sexual activity) should have an annual syphilis screening by obtaining a serum RPR. More frequent screening (every 3 to 6 months) is also recommended for those with multiple sex partners, unprotected intercourse and illicit drug use. (*for more information <http://AIDSinfo.nih.gov>*)
- All MSM (men who have sex with men) patients should have an annual syphilis screening by obtaining a serum RPR. (*see page #9 of CDC Guidelines*)
- Any patient presenting with an STI (Sexual Transmitted Infection) should be screened for syphilis.
- Any woman who delivers a stillborn infant should be tested for syphilis. (*see page #7 of CDC guidelines*)

We recognize that these recommendations may create some changes to your practice but strongly encourage you to institute them immediately. Syphilis can be eliminated in our community through education and prevention, increased screening, diagnosis and, most importantly, appropriate treatment. Condom use remains to be an effective way to prevent all sexually transmitted infections, including syphilis.

We appreciate and need your support in helping us make Columbus a healthier and safer community. For more information on syphilis, please go to www.publichealth.columbus.gov. If you have any questions or comments, please contact us directly at 614-645-6444 or call the Sexual Health Clinic at 645-7772.



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