



PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY: Syphilis (Bicillin L-A® shortage)

May 30, 2017

From Columbus Public Health

What you need to know

Early syphilis (primary, secondary, early latent) is rising in Franklin County. Between 2013 and 2016, early syphilis rates increased by ~80%. The rate among men is 59.1/100,000 compared to women at 9.8/100,000.

There have been 2 congenital syphilis cases in 2017.

There is currently a national shortage of Penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A®).

What to watch for

Syphilis (the “great imitator”) should be suspected in at-risk individuals with: a painless chancre (ulcer) in genitalia, anus or mouth; whole body rash (with or without palmo-plantar involvement); oral mucous patches; Condyloma lata; aseptic meningitis; uveitis/neuroretinitis/optic neuritis; cranial nerve palsies; hearing loss/ringing in ears; stroke; etc. Syphilis can also be asymptomatic (latent stages).

What you can do

Follow current CDCSTD Treatment Guidelines:

www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/syphilis.htm

Early syphilis¹ → A single intramuscular (IM) injection of Bicillin L-A® 2.4 MU for HIV negative and HIV positive patients.*

Late Latent Syphilis¹ → Three weekly IM injections of Bicillin L-A® 2.4 MU for HIV negative and HIV positive patients.

Pregnant women in Franklin Co. should be screened for syphilis at least 3 times (intake, 28-32 weeks and at delivery). Only penicillin is recommended for syphilis treatment in pregnant women.¹

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) by fax at (614) 525-8890 or call (614) 525-8888.

Who is at risk

1. Men who have sex with men
2. Transgender women
3. HIV positive individuals
4. Individuals taking HIV PrEP
5. Individuals who: have multiple sex partners (or a partner with multiple partners); have anonymous sex partners; use the internet, apps or social media to meet sex partners; engage in sex while using recreational drugs (e.g., methamphetamines); have had a recent STI diagnosis (e.g., chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis); present for care due to STI symptoms; and, exchange sex for money or drugs

To learn more

1. **CDC 2015 STD Treatment Guidelines:**
www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/syphilis.htm
2. **Screen, diagnose and treat syphilis in accordance with current CDC guidelines:**
www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/syphilis.htm
3. **CDC, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Penicillin G Benzathine (Bicillin L-A®) Shortage:**
<http://bit.ly/CDCBicillinShortage>

Questions & Comments

If you have any questions or comments, please call the HIV/STD Prevention Program at 614-645-8539.