



County of Erie

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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HEALTH ADVISORY #301

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INCREASE IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SYPHILIS CASES IN ERIE COUNTY

Please distribute to the Healthcare Providers, Infection Control Department, Emergency Department, Employee Health Service, Infectious Disease Department, Director of Nursing, Medical Director, Laboratory Service, and all patient care areas.

SUMMARY

The Erie County Department of Health (ECHOD) with the cooperation of the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) is currently investigating 12 cases of primary and secondary syphilis. All cases have been diagnosed over the last two months with most cases being diagnosed in December 2012.

Patient interviews have demonstrated epidemiologic links among some of these cases. Interviews and partner testing are ongoing at this time. More linkages are expected to be made. All confirmed cases have been identified among men who have sex with men (MSM).

Providers should screen all male patients who indicate sex with other men (including men who report sex with man and women), in accordance with CDC guidelines.

ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING

- Clinicians should assess sexually transmitted infection (STI) risks for all male patients, including routine inquiry about the sex of partners.
- Routine laboratory screening for common STIs, including oral and rectal testing, as per “Centers for Disease Control and Prevention STD Treatment Guidelines, 2010” is indicated for all sexually active MSM.

Consider syphilis when patients present with the following symptoms:

- Painless ulcerated genital (and/or rectal) lesions. (primary syphilis)
- Compatible rash on palms or soles, body rash, alopecia, lymphadenopathy of groin – especially with a history of a painless lesion. (secondary syphilis)

Testing for syphilis:

- Order screening RPR AND confirmatory test (FTA-ABS or TP-PA) together. Indicate on the requisition that early syphilis is suspected and note clinical symptoms. The confirmatory test is necessary to diagnose early infection, since the RPR may be equivocal early in the disease.

- Some clinical laboratories screen for syphilis with treponemal tests, typically by enzyme immunoassay (EIA) or chemiluminescence immunoassay (CIA). This strategy will identify persons with untreated or incompletely treated syphilis and persons previously treated for syphilis. The positive predictive value for syphilis associated with a treponemal screening test result might be lower among populations with low syphilis prevalence.

SYPHILIS CONTACTS

- For patients who report a sexual contact with a syphilis case, note this on the requisition and order an RPR and confirmatory test.

REPORTING AND/OR REFERRAL FOR TREATMENT

- Suspect cases of early syphilis must be reported.
- Contact the ECDOH at (716) 858-2957 to report a case or to refer for treatment.

PARTNER SERVICES

- Providers should quickly inform individuals who are exposed to STIs/HIV of options for notifying partners and refer patients to Partner Services for assistance.
- The ECDOH will contact diagnosing providers and/or patient(s) for additional information. Trained health department staff confidentially investigates every early syphilis case.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- NYSDOH, Western Regional Office at 1-800-962-5064
- Sexually Transmitted Disease Guidelines: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/2010/>
- Partner Services information: http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/std/partner_services/info_for_providers.htm
- STI Clinical Laboratory Testing information: Erie County Public Health Laboratory at 716-898-6100

The ECDOH Health Alert & Advisory System is an e-mail notification system designed to alert community partners about important health related information. You can sign up to receive alerts & advisories at <http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=node/59>.

Health Category Definitions:

Health Alert FLASH: conveys the highest level of importance due to a large-scale, catastrophic public health emergency; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Alert Priority: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention to a health problem or situation

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; no immediate action necessary

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