

For Health Professionals

Health Alerts

Health Alert #7 - Syphilis Alert - 2001

This communication alerts you to the increases in infectious syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD) among men who have sex with men (MSM) in New York State.

Within the past year the frequency of STD has risen dramatically in MSM across the United States. In New York City during 1999, syphilis increased 60% to 130 cases from the 81 cases reported in 1998. Locally, in Erie County to date this year, we have recorded four cases of secondary syphilis. In 2000 we recorded one case. As has been observed elsewhere, this cluster of cases has occurred among the MSM population.

The importance of STD/HIV risk assessment and screening in MSM cannot be overemphasized. The New York State Health Department recommends the following guidelines.

STD/HIV Screening Guidelines for men who have sex with men (MSM)

Summary Recommendations:

These guidelines apply to both HIV-infected and HIV-negative MSM, and should be employed regardless of history of condom use.

- All men who have had sex with other men in the past year:
HIV serology, if HIV-negative or if not previously tested
Syphilis serology
Pharyngeal culture for *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*
- All men who have had receptive anal intercourse in the past year:
Rectal culture for *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*
Rectal culture for *Chlamydia trachomatis*
- More frequent testing is indicated for:
MSM with anonymous or multiple partners
MSM who use crystal methamphetamine or inhaled nitrites ("poppers")
Men whose sex partners participate in these activities
MSM with symptoms of STD or HIV, regardless of when previous tests were done

Also recommend:

Immunization against hepatitis A and B if unvaccinated or no history of prior infection

Also offer:

Type specific serology for herpes simplex virus (HSV) infection

Please address any questions regarding this matter to Cecelia Kohlmeier at 858-7687.