



# COUNTY OF YOLO

Health and Human Services Agency

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## HEALTH ALERT

To: All Healthcare Providers

From: Ron Chapman, MD, MPH  
Health Officer, Yolo County

Date: February 19, 2019

Subject: Syphilis (*T. pallidum*) Advisory

### Background:

In 2018 Yolo County witnessed a dramatic increase in syphilis cases. Over the previous 5 years the case rate in Yolo County has increased from 8.8 cases per 100,000 people in 2013, to 46.2 cases per 100,000 in 2018. Cases of syphilis in pregnancy increased from 2 in 2017 to six in 2018. Five of the women had significant barriers to prenatal care and access to treatment, resulting in a sentinel public health event - we had our first probable congenital syphilis case in nearly a decade. As a result, Dr. Ron Chapman, the Yolo County Health Officer is requesting providers take actions in the testing and treatment of syphilis.

### Target Populations:

Yolo County recommends targeted screening and testing in individuals with the following risk factors: homelessness, substance users, men who have sex with men, people diagnosed with other sexually transmitted infections (gonorrhea/chlamydia/HIV), aged 20-30 years, and incarcerated individuals.

Pregnant women with increased risk factors should be retested in their 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester.

### Actions Requested of All Clinicians:

1. **Screen** for syphilis in all target populations in clinics, hospitals, and emergency departments.
2. **Diagnosis of syphilis in persons with no previous documented diagnosis** requires **two** tests: A reactive nontreponemal test should be confirmed with a treponemal test unless a previous positive treponemal test is documented.

(1) Nontreponemal test	(1) Treponemal test
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rapid Plasma Reagin [RPR]</li> <li>• Venereal Disease Research Laboratory (VDRL)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluorescent treponemal antibody absorbed [FTA-ABS]</li> <li>• <i>T. pallidum</i> passive particle agglutination assay [TP-PA]</li> <li>• Enzyme immunoassays [EIAs]</li> <li>• Chemiluminescence immunoassays</li> <li>• Immunoblots</li> <li>• Rapid treponemal assays</li> </ul>

3. **Treatment** based on the syphilis stage:
  - a. *Adult primary, secondary, and early latent syphilis* cases are treated with 1 dose Benzathine penicillin G 2.4 million units IM. For PCN allergy please see CDC website below.
  - b. *Late latent and latent syphilis of unknown duration* cases are treated with Benzathine penicillin G 7.2 million units, administered as 3 doses of 2.4 million units IM, at 1-week intervals.
  - c. Pregnant women should be treated with the penicillin regimen appropriate for their stage of infection. The dosing interval of 7 days must be strictly adhered to in pregnancy.
4. **Screen** sexual partners of syphilis cases.
5. **Screen** syphilis cases and high-risk populations for HIV, gonorrhea, and chlamydia.
6. **Educate** patients at high risk of infection about healthy sexual practices.
7. **Report** syphilis cases by fax at (530) 669-1549 or CalREDIE – within one (1) working day of diagnosis.

**For more information:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/default.htm>

California Department of Public Health  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Syphilis.aspx>

**If you have questions or require assistance with statewide search for syphilis history and RPR titers, please contact Yolo County HHSA Community Health Branch at (530) 666-8645 during office hours and select the communicable disease reporting option.**