



Erie County
Department of
Health



Public Health
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COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

HEALTH ADVISORY #363

November 12, 2024

INCREASE IN CONGENITAL SYPHILIS IN ERIE COUNTY

Please distribute to Healthcare Providers, Hospitals, Laboratories, Emergency Rooms, Community Health Centers, College Health Centers, and Internal Medicine, Family Medicine, Pediatric, Adolescent Medicine, Infectious Disease, and Primary Care Providers

SUMMARY

- Rising syphilis diagnoses in pregnant persons, both nationally and in New York State (NYS), have resulted in increases in congenital syphilis births as well as associated infant deaths. [NYS Health Advisory November 6, 2024](#)
- In NYS counties, outside of New York City, congenital syphilis diagnoses increased by 267% from nine in 2019 to 33 in 2023. Preliminary data from January to October 2024, shows this trend continuing, with 26 congenital syphilis diagnoses reported.
- Erie County is experiencing an increase in congenital syphilis cases. For 2024 as of October 31, 2024, 7 congenital syphilis diagnosis have been reported, of which 2 were stillborn; 0 diagnosis in 2023; and 1 diagnosis in 2022.
- Increased efforts to link pregnant persons to prenatal care and screening for syphilis at least three times throughout pregnancy are needed.
- Shared responsibility and communication among providers are needed; non-prenatal providers are strongly encouraged to bridge clinical gaps by providing necessary care until patients are successfully linked and engaged in obstetric care.

SCREENING GUIDANCE

The best way to prevent congenital syphilis is to:

- Determine pregnancy status of all persons of reproductive capacity diagnosed with syphilis,
- Take active steps to connect all pregnant persons to prenatal care, including facilitating enrollment in Medicaid when needed,
- Ensure pregnant persons are tested at
 1. the time pregnancy is first identified,
 2. early in their third trimester (at 28 weeks or as soon thereafter as reasonably possible but no later than at 32 weeks of pregnancy), and
 3. again at delivery.

For pregnant persons who screen syphilis negative at their first exam, the third trimester screen will ensure adequate time for persons who seroconvert during their pregnancy to be



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appropriately treated prior to delivery. For additional details, refer to the [New York State Department of Health \(NYSDOH\) Interim Guidance](#) issued in July of 2023.

RECOMMENDED TREATMENT REGIMENS

Pregnant persons should be treated with the recommended regimen per their specific stage of infection with Penicillin G, as per [CDC STI Treatment Guidelines, 2021](#). The [Erie County Department of Health \(ECDOH\) Sexual Health Clinic](#) serves as a resource for syphilis management in Erie County.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

All diagnosed cases of syphilis must be reported to the local Health Department of the patient's residence. Erie County residents can be reported to (716) 858-7697 during normal business hours.

RESOURCES

[NYS Health Advisory, November 6, 2024](#)

[NYSDOH Interim Guidance issued July 2023](#)

[CDC STI Treatment Guidelines, 2021](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions for Providers](#)

[ECDOH Sexual Health Clinic](#)

[ECDOH Epidemiology Office](#)

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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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