



OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

St. Clair County Health Department

2022

SCCHD- 03

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TO: St. Clair County Healthcare Providers, Hospital ICPs, Emergency Departments, Clinicians, Long Term Care Facilities, OB/GYNs, Neurologists, ENT's, Ophthalmologists
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HEALTH ADVISORY: SYPHILIS

Between March 15 and April 26, 2022, three individuals with manifestations of early ocular, otic or neurosyphilis were diagnosed in Kalamazoo County. Two cases were in women. All individuals received 14 days of intravenous penicillin as the primary recommended treatment option by the CDC. Ocular, otic or neurosyphilis can occur at any stage of syphilis and requires a high index of clinical suspicion. Ocular and otic syphilis can lead to permanent visual or hearing loss. In lieu of these cases and rising syphilis incidence in Michigan, clinicians should consider the following recommendations:

- Conduct thorough sexual histories including on partners, practices, (barrier) protection, prior sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and pregnancy intention/status.
- Screen for neurologic, visual, and auditory signs and symptoms in patients at risk for syphilis (e.g., men who have sex with men, people with HIV, and people with multiple or anonymous partners).
- Screen patients for syphilis if they present with neurologic, visual, or auditory complaints.
- Conduct a careful neurological exam, including an evaluation of all cranial nerves, for patients with reactive nontreponemal and treponemal serology and clinical signs of early syphilis.
- Conduct an immediate ophthalmologic evaluation for patients with syphilis and ocular complaints.
- Consult St. Clair County Health Department (SCCHD) if you suspect ocular, otic or neurosyphilis.
- Report ocular, otic, or neurosyphilis cases to SCCHD within 24 hours.
- Report any previously unreported ocular, otic or neurosyphilis cases to SCCHD that might have occurred since January 1, 2022.

Any cranial nerve dysfunction should prompt a lumbar puncture and CSF evaluation prior to treatment if possible. Infectious disease or SCCHD may advise lumbar puncture per clinical discretion. Ocular, otic and neurosyphilis are treated the same clinically; see CDC treatment guidelines here: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/neurosyphilis.htm>

This Health Advisory follows a 5/2/2022 MDHHS Health Alert Notice about increasing congenital syphilis and rising syphilis cases in women. Clinicians should therefore also consider these recommendations:

- Test all women for syphilis who present with other STIs or have risk factors for STIs.
- All pregnant women residing in Michigan should be screened for syphilis at their first prenatal appointment and again in the third trimester between 28-32 weeks, as required by State Law.
- Infants should not be discharged from the hospital, unless the mother has been tested for syphilis at least once during pregnancy and preferably again at delivery.

Call SCCHD with questions or to report confirmed/suspected cases **(810) 987-5300**.