



Public Health Alert

**Early Syphilis Cases Doubling
66% of Cases in Men who have Sex with Men
Many Co-Infected with HIV**

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In 2007 primary and secondary cases of syphilis in Contra Costa County doubled to 32 cases.

During the 1990s, the overall incidence of syphilis declined nationally, in California and in Contra Costa County. Locally there was one case reported of primary syphilis in the year 2000. In the five-year period between 2001 and 2006 there was an average of 14 new cases of primary and/or secondary syphilis per year. Syphilis cases in men who have sex with men (MSM) accounted for a small proportion of cases in the 1990's. However, cases in MSM have increased in recent years. In 2007, cases in MSM represented 66% of the cases (n=21).

The risk of HIV transmission is of particular concern in the current syphilis increase. Ten of the 21 syphilis cases have co-infection with HIV. Sexually Transmitted Diseases are known facilitators of HIV infection.

Practically all the 2007 primary and secondary cases occurred in men. Thirteen cases occurred in Latinos, eight in African Americans, five in Whites, three in Asians and three in individuals whose race/ethnicity were not known. Nineteen live in West Contra Costa, seven in Central Contra Costa and six live in East Contra Costa.

Diagnosis of syphilis in twenty-three persons was done at facilities within the county, (HMO, PMD, County Clinics), and nine were diagnosed in facilities located outside the county.

What can health providers do?

- **Obtain a sexual practices history.**
- **Maintain an index of suspicion regarding high risk sexual or drug risk behavior.**
- **Order serologic tests for syphilis:** Both RPR and TPPA, as well as HIV testing for the patient, and sexual partners of the patient.
- **Stay current on STD treatment guidelines.**
- **Report STDs** *Courtesy of Sharon Adler, MD, STD/HIV Prevention & Training Center*

**A REMINDER
DO NOT USE
FLUOROQUINOLONES
TO TREAT GONORRHEA**

In April 2007, the CDC has advised that **fluoroquinolones not be used in the treatment of gonorrhea**, due to rapidly increasing rates of resistance. California has resistance rates of greater than 25%.

**For Tools/Links listed below, go to
www.cchealth.org/topics/std/**

- ◇ California STD Treatment Guidelines 2007
- ◇ California GC Treatment Guidelines 2007
- ◇ Evaluating Patients for Primary Syphilis, 2007
- ◇ Evaluating Patients for Secondary Syphilis, 2007
- ◇ Patient Delivered Partner Therapy for Chlamydia & Gonorrhea, 2007