



# Health Alert Network

## Tri-County Health Department

Serving Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas Counties

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John M. Douglas, Jr., M.D. Executive Director

The pages that follow contain information critical to protecting the health of your patients and the citizens of Colorado.

## HAN ADVISORY

Number of pages including cover: 4

Subject: **Advisory - Congenital Syphilis in Colorado**

Message ID: 11/21/2016 4:30:00 PM

Recipients: HAN Community Members.

From: TRI-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Adams, Arapahoe and Douglas County, Colorado

Recipient Instructions: **Tri-County Health Department is forwarding you the attached HAN. You may have already received this broadcast if you are on the CDPHE distribution list, however, we wanted to ensure you did not miss this important information. No response is required.**

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You have received this message based upon the information contained within our Health Alert Network Notification System. If you have a different or additional e-mail or fax address that you would like us to use, or if you have additional questions, call 720-200-1477.

### Categories of Health Alert Network Messages:

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

**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; unlikely to require immediate action.

**Info Service/Public Health Brief:** Provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.

You may download a copy of this HAN from the TCHD website at  
<http://www.tchd.org/259/Health-Alert-Network>



HEALTH ALERT NETWORK BROADCAST

MESSAGE ID: 11212016 12:00

FROM: CO-CDPHE

SUBJECT: HAN Advisory - Congenital syphilis in Colorado

RECIPIENTS: Local Public Health Agencies / IPs / Clinical Labs / EDs / ID Physicians / Coroners

RECIPIENT INSTRUCTIONS: Local Public Health Agencies, please forward to healthcare providers

## HEALTH ADVISORY | Congenital syphilis in Colorado | Nov. 21, 2016

Health care providers: Please distribute widely in your office

### Key points

- Colorado has confirmed its first congenital syphilis case since 2007.
- Nationally the congenital syphilis rate has increased by 38 percent between 2012 and 2014.
- Colorado is at high risk for additional cases of congenital syphilis. Infections increased 96 percent among women 15-44 years old between the first 10 months of 2015 and the first 10 months of 2016.
- Congenital syphilis is preventable and treatable, but serious health consequences can occur when it is left untreated. Congenital syphilis also can cause fetal death and stillbirth.
- The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force strongly recommends clinicians screen all pregnant women for syphilis infection. All women who deliver stillborn infants also should be tested for syphilis.
- Healthcare providers must report all cases of syphilis, at any stage, within 24 hours of detection to the state health department's Laboratory Surveillance Unit (see guidance, below).

### Background information

Congenital syphilis (CS) occurs when a mother infected with syphilis transmits the infection to her child during pregnancy. Congenital syphilis can be prevented and treated, but serious health consequences can occur when it is left untreated. Those include deformed bones, severe anemia, enlarged liver and spleen, jaundice, meningitis, skin rashes, blindness and deafness. Babies infected with syphilis during pregnancy may have developmental delays or other poor health outcomes. Congenital syphilis also can cause fetal death and stillbirth.

Among pregnant women with syphilis, treatment with penicillin is highly effective at preventing CS.

Syphilis is increasing in Colorado and in the United States. National rates of CS have increased to 11.6 cases per 100,000 live births in 2014, from 8.4 cases per 100,000 live births in 2012.

Colorado has confirmed its first case of CS in Colorado since 2007, when there were two cases. In Colorado, syphilis infections for men and women increased 23 percent, to 10.2 cases per 100,000 population in the first 10 months of 2016, from 8.3 cases per 100,000 population during the same time period in 2015. Syphilis among women of reproductive age (15-44 years old) has increased even more rapidly. Infections increased 96 percent, to 4.1 cases per 100,000 population in the first 10 months of 2016, from 2.1 cases per 100,000 population during the same time period in 2015.

Healthcare providers have two major opportunities to prevent CS: By preventing syphilis among women aged 15 to 44 years and men who have sex with women, and by preventing mother-to-infant transmission among pregnant women already infected with syphilis.

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## Recommendations / guidance

- Screen all pregnant women for syphilis at their first prenatal visit. Asymptomatic women can spread the infection to their unborn babies.
- Rescreen high-risk women early in their third trimester and again at delivery. High-risk women include those with a history of syphilis infection, incarceration, drug use, multiple or concurrent partners, and those who live in areas with high rates of syphilis.
- Take immediate action for patients diagnosed with syphilis.
  - Treat pregnant women diagnosed with syphilis with penicillin immediately. Treatment at least 30 days prior to delivery is likely to prevent congenital syphilis.
  - Report all cases of syphilis and congenital syphilis to your state or local health department. Syphilis, including congenital syphilis, is a 24-hour reportable condition in Colorado.
- Before discharging any newborn infant from the hospital, make sure the mother was tested for syphilis at least once during her pregnancy or at delivery. If the mother tested positive, ensure she and the baby are evaluated and treated if necessary.
- Test women who deliver stillborn infants for syphilis.
- Report suspected congenital syphilis cases within 24 hours of identification.
  - Contact Adrianna Hervey, CDPHE Syphilis Coordinator, 303-692-2694 or [adrianna.hervey@state.co.us](mailto:adrianna.hervey@state.co.us) or
  - Fax a confidential morbidity report (CMR) to CDPHE Laboratory Surveillance at 303-782-5393. The CMR is available at [https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/DC\\_STI\\_HIVSurv\\_Sexually-Transmitted-Infection-%28STI%29-Confidential-Report-Form.pdf](https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/DC_STI_HIVSurv_Sexually-Transmitted-Infection-%28STI%29-Confidential-Report-Form.pdf)

- Work with your local health department, prenatal care providers and other local organizations to address barriers to obtaining early and adequate prenatal care for the most vulnerable pregnant women in your community. Women who are uninsured or underinsured, and women with substance use issues, have been found to be at increased risk of receiving inadequate or no prenatal care, placing their unborn babies at risk for congenital syphilis.

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## Additional resources

- CDC Dear Colleague Letter, Syphilis: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/dstdp/dcl-csmmwr-nov-12-2015.pdf>
- MMWR article, Increase in Incidence of Congenital Syphilis: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6444a3.htm>
- CDC 2015 STD Treatment Guidelines, Congenital Syphilis: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/congenital.htm>
- CDPHE STI/HIV fact sheets: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B8iOd1Qz6sAXZ3RjdUdISUQ1SGs>

