

BENEFIT NEWS

WVCH: STI Treatment and Support

October 15, 2018

Syphilis and other STI rates continue to be on the rise in Marion and Polk County.

Several factors may be responsible for the increasing rates of syphilis. In the rising use of HIV Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), there is more frequent testing and identification of STI's. Nevertheless, an increase in sexual risk-taking behavior in PrEP users has not been determined consistently.

It is recommended that more frequent assessment of sexual risk should be considered in all patients, even if a patient is not presenting with any active complaints. This includes an intake of number of sexual partners, types of sexual activity and a discussion of what constitutes high risk behavior. This would serve to determine an individual's risk factors for sexually transmitted infections for future screening plans, to educate the patient regarding risk of transmission and safe practices including condom use, and to screen them during the visit for chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and HIV.



“Educating my patients around STI testing helps them take control of their sexual health.”

- WVCH Provider

Screening for Syphilis should begin with a treponemal test :

Syphilis IgG EIA testing followed by nontreponemal confirmation (RPR, then TP-PA). Someone presenting with a possible chancre may have negative treponemal studies, so should be treated. A positive treponemal screening indicates history of infection, possibly recent if a risk factor assessment supports this. The nontreponemal testing confirms syphilis and can be used to monitor response to treatment.

(See attached Syphilis staging chart).

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It is with the hopes of frequent sexual risk assessment and patient education and more frequent testing that we will be able to identify and treat the higher risk individuals and gain greater control of this epidemic.

In Marion County, the incidence rates of syphilis have steadily increased over the past several years along with chlamydia and gonorrhea, mirroring the state of Oregon and the United States. The highest syphilis incidence rate was found in males ages 20-29 and coincides with the highest risk population - men who have sex with men (MSM). In 2017, 70% of male cases in Marion County were identified to be MSM. Additionally, incidence rates of syphilis were higher in the Hispanic population. Compared with national demographic data on STIs, African Americans, Pacific Islanders and Hispanics represent the greatest affected populations. In 2017, an increase in the cases of newborn syphilis in the US points to a burgeoning epidemic and an increased need for clinician awareness.

In Polk County, the rates of syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhea have also been on the rise the past few years. The incidence of chlamydia is highest among individuals that identify as African American/Black for both Polk and Marion counties and Oregon as a whole. Chlamydia continues to affect women more than men, most notably in the 20-29 age group. Conversely gonorrhea affects more men than women but like chlamydia it is most prevalent in the 20-29 age group. Syphilis rates have been increasing in Polk County the past two years, with a higher incidence in men.

Included as an attachment with this news letter is:

- **Syphilis Staging Chart**
- **STI Summary for WVCH**

Resource Information provided by:
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Questions:

Contact WVCH Customer Service 503-584-2150.

Or you can contact the Marion County Health Department 503-588-5621

or Polk County Health Department 503-623-8175