August 18, 2020

MEDICAL ADVICE: CONGENITAL SYphilis INCREASING STATEWIDE

Dear Healthcare Provider:

The Department of Health (DOH) recorded 10 probable cases of congenital syphilis from January 2020 to present, reflecting a marked increase in congenital syphilis in Hawaii this year. This increase is consistent with a nationwide trend that began in 2014. Congenital syphilis prevention includes syphilis prevention for women and their partners, timely identification and prompt treatment of pregnant women with syphilis, and testing with treatment of newborns. Infants may be asymptomatic at birth and still infected because of maternal reinfection, even with adequate maternal treatment a month or more before delivery.

DOH Recommendations

1. Screen at risk, sexually active women (e.g., women with substance use issues, homelessness, history of incarceration, history of sexually transmitted diseases [STDs], or other sociodemographic factors) for syphilis during annual medical visits regardless of intent to become pregnant.
2. Screen pregnant women for syphilis: 1) as early as possible during their pregnancy, 2) at 28–32 weeks of gestation, and 3) at delivery.
3. Obtain a baseline, quantitative Rapid Plasma Reagin (RPR) on all neonates born to mothers who have a reactive nontreponemal (e.g., Venereal Disease Research Laboratory [VDRL] or RPR) and treponemal test result.
4. Treat neonates with proven or probable congenital syphilis, and those whose mothers were inadequately treated for syphilis, including mothers treated within 30 days of delivery, with:
   a. Aqueous crystalline penicillin G, 50,000 units/kg/dose IV every 12 hours during the first 7 days of life and every 8 hours thereafter for a total of 10 days (preferred), OR
   b. Procaine penicillin G 50,000 units/kg IM in a single daily dose for 10 days.
5. Treat infants whose nontreponemal test result is equal to or less than fourfold the maternal titer and whose mother had adequate treatment for syphilis during pregnancy. Recommended treatment is one dose of benzathine penicillin G, 50,000 units/kg IM.

1 These are compatible with the current CDC STD Treatment Guidelines (https://www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/default.htm) and the current American Academy of Pediatrics Redbook (2018)

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6. Consider treating infants whose nontreponemal test result is equal to or less than fourfold the maternal titer (including infants with a nonreactive result), and whose mother had adequate treatment for syphilis before pregnancy, if the infant cannot be adequately followed and tested. Recommended treatment is one dose of benzathine penicillin G, 50,000 units/kg IM.

7. Treat the partner(s) of patients with syphilis or other sexually transmitted infection to avoid reinfection. Contact DOH for assistance (contact information noted below) with partner referrals, if needed.

Intervention Services
DOH assistance with syphilis case management or referrals may be requested through (808) 733-9281 (press#1), Monday-Friday 8:30AM–4:00PM

Clinical Consultations
May be requested through (808) 733-9281 (press #2), Monday–Friday, 9:30–11:30 AM and 3–4 PM (except state holidays) from the DOH STD/HIV Clinic and online from the National Network of Prevention Training Centers at https://www.stdccn.org/.

Thank you for your partnership in protecting our mothers and babies.

Sincerely,

Glenn M. Wasserman, MD, MPH
Chief, Communicable Disease and Public Health Nursing Division

Sarah Y. Park, MD, FAAP
State Epidemiologist

Attachment

** This message contains privileged communication between the Department of Health and clinicians and should not be shared with or forwarded to those not included among the original recipients. **
Please report all SUSPECTED OR PROBABLE congenital syphilis cases, including all clinical
and laboratory reports, as soon as possible to the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH):
https://health.hawaii.gov/harmreduction/files/2013/05/std-case-form.pdf:

**Kauaʻi**
Kauaʻi District Health Office
Harm Reduction Services Branch
3040 Umi Street
Lihuʻe, HI 96766
Phone 808-821-2741
Fax 808-241-3480

**Oʻahu**
Diamond Head Health Center
Harm Reduction Services Branch
3627 Kīlauea Avenue, #304
Honolulu, HI 96816
Phone 808-733-9293
Fax 808-733-9291

**Maui**
Wailuku Health Center
Harm Reduction Services Branch
121 Mahalani Street, Suite 104
Wailuku, HI 96793
Phone 808-984-2129
Fax 808-984-2132

**Hawaiʻi (Big Island)**
Waiakea Health Center
Harm Reduction Services Branch
191 Kuawa Street
Hilo, HI 96720
Phone 808-974-4247
Fax 808-974-4243

Hawaii Administrative Rules, Title 11, Chapter 156 mandates health care provider reporting of syphilis
and congenital syphilis cases within 3 working days of diagnosis. Information about DOH reporting
requirements is available at https://health.hawaii.gov/harmreduction/for-providers/disease-reporting/.

**RESOURCES:**

AAP Committee on Infectious Diseases. “Syphilis” in Red Book: Report of the Committee on Infectious

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sexually Transmitted Diseases Treatment Guidelines, 2015.

An algorithm for infant treatment recommendation corresponding to the CDC Syphilis Treatment Guidelines on

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Increase in Incidence of Congenital Syphilis — United States,
2012–2014.* MMWR; 2015;64(No 44); 1241-1245.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Missed Opportunities for Prevention of Congenital Syphilis —
United States, 2018.* MMWR; 2020; 69(22);661-665

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