



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P. O. BOX 3378  
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:  
File:

August 18, 2020

**MEDICAL ADVISORY: 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<sup>1</sup>**

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.

<sup>1</sup> 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)

**\*\* 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. \*\***

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

## ATTACHMENT

**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>:

### **Kaua`i**

Kaua`i District Health Office  
Harm Reduction Services Branch  
3040 Umi Street  
Lihu`e, HI 96766  
Phone 808-821-2741  
Fax 808-241-3480

### **O`ahu**

Diamond Head Health Center  
Harm Reduction Services Branch  
3627 Kilauea 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

### **Hawai`i (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 Diseases. Elk Grove Village, IL :American Academy of Pediatrics, 2018.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sexually Transmitted Diseases Treatment Guidelines, 2015. MMWR Recomm Rep 2015;64(No. RR-3): 45-47. <https://www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/default.htm>. Updated June 4, 2015. Accessed July 6, 2020.

An algorithm for infant treatment recommendation corresponding to the CDC Syphilis Treatment Guidelines on pp. (above) is at [https://californiaptc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Congenital\\_Syphilis\\_Algorithm-110919-1.pdf](https://californiaptc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Congenital_Syphilis_Algorithm-110919-1.pdf)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Increase in Incidence of Congenital Syphilis — United States, 2012–2014*. MMWR; 2015;64(No 44): 1241-1245. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6444a3.htm>. November 13, 2015. Accessed July 6, 2020.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Missed Opportunities for Prevention of Congenital Syphilis — United States, 2018*. MMWR; 2020; 69(22);661-665 <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6922a1.htm> June 5, 2020. Accessed July 6, 2020.

US Preventive Services Task Force. Screening for Syphilis Infection in Pregnant Women US Preventive Services Task Force Reaffirmation Recommendation Statement. *JAMA* 2018; 320(9): 911-917. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2698933>