



November 2013

Dear Health Care Provider:

SYPHILIS

The Winnipeg Health Region (WHR) is experiencing an outbreak of infectious syphilis. There have been over 40 cases reported in the first ten months of 2013, which is more than double last year's rate. Most cases are being diagnosed in men who have sex with men. About one third of cases are HIV positive.

CLINICAL

- **Primary syphilis:** painless genital or oral ulcerative lesions, +/- inguinal lymphadenopathy. The initial ulcer may heal spontaneously.
- **Secondary syphilis:** generalized maculopapular nonpruritic rash (typically including palms and soles), +/- fever, +/- generalized lymphadenopathy.
- **Early Latent syphilis:** most cases are asymptomatic, only detected with serologic screening.
- Syphilis significantly increases the risk of transmission and acquisition of HIV.

TESTING

- **ALL pregnant women - congenital syphilis is often severe, disabling, and life-threatening**
- **ALL persons reporting unprotected sex with casual or anonymous partners should be routinely tested for sexually transmitted infections (STI) on a regular basis.**
- **ALL persons with any confirmed or suspected STI such as gonorrhea or chlamydia should be tested for syphilis and HIV.**

What to send to Cadham Provincial Laboratory (CPL)

- 5-10 ml blood in a red-stoppered tube or a serum separator tube (red top with yellow cap)
- CPL requisition form should request syphilis serology testing and HIV antibody testing; and should **provide information on reason for testing, including symptoms or suspected stage of syphilis (primary, secondary, or early latent)**. (On the CPL requisition, you can select the STI panel, which includes serology testing for syphilis, HIV and hepatitis B.)
- A person presenting with ulcers, sores, or moist skin lesions may be tested with a dacron swab of the lesion placed into viral transport medium. The sample must remain refrigerated until sent to CPL and the CPL requisition should clearly indicate the site and test requested (i.e., *T. pallidum* PCR testing).
- Contact the Serology Section at CPL at 945-6123 if you have any questions about testing.

TREATMENT

- **Benzathine penicillin G (Bicillin®) 2.4 million units IM** in a single session (separated into 2 injections). See special considerations for pregnant women and HIV positive persons at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/syphilis.pdf>.
- The Bicillin® in preloaded syringes is provided free of charge by Manitoba Health and can only be obtained by faxing a completed Manitoba Health STD Medication Administration Form. Forms may be obtained by calling the Materials Distribution Agency at 945-0570. Or the form may be downloaded from: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/form11.pdf>
- **Sex contacts of known syphilis cases MUST ALSO be treated immediately for syphilis, without awaiting testing results.**

REPORTING

Syphilis and HIV are reportable communicable diseases under *The Public Health Act*. If you are contacted by a public health nurse for follow up of your patient who has an STI, your collaboration and assistance would be greatly appreciated.