

# Health Advisory: Syphilis in Pregnancy

Minnesota Department of Health, Thurs, Jan 25 12:30 CST 2024

## Action Steps

**Local and tribal health department:** Please forward to hospitals, clinics, urgent care centers, emergency departments, and convenience clinics in your jurisdiction.

**Hospitals, clinics and other facilities:** Please forward to obstetric providers, infection preventionists, primary care clinicians, infectious disease doctors, emergency department staff and all other health care providers who might see **pregnant** people.

**Health care providers:**

- Screen ALL pregnant people for syphilis at least three times during pregnancy: at first encounter, early in the third trimester, and at delivery.
- Report pregnant persons infected with syphilis (congenital syphilis), including syphilitic stillbirths, by calling MDH at 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414.
- Contact MDH at 651-201-5414 or 877-676-5414 for consultation. This on-call number is available to health professionals 24/7.
- Subscribe to [HIV/STD Prevention & Data Updates](https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNMDH/subscriber/new?topic_id=MNMDH_429) ([https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNMDH/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=MNMDH\\_429](https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNMDH/subscriber/new?topic_id=MNMDH_429)) for updates about Congenital Syphilis.

## Background

Mirroring nationwide syphilis trends, Minnesota has experienced a 244% increase in syphilis over the past decade. Among females, early syphilis cases have increased by over 1,800% (from 18 to 345 cases from 2012 to 2022). During this time, congenital syphilis cases rose nationally, with more than 3,700 babies born with syphilis in 2022, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In Minnesota, as of December 31, 2023, 29 cases of congenital syphilis have been reported -- the highest in more than 40 years (2023 data are preliminary and subject to change). Notably, in 2013 and 2014 there were 0 cases of congenital syphilis in Minnesota.

Congenital syphilis is a preventable condition with the potential for pregnancy complications, death, or severe harm to the infant. However, timely, adequate screening and treatment can prevent congenital syphilis.

Syphilis and congenital syphilis disproportionately affect communities that experience other health disparities, including African American and American Indian communities in Minnesota. Some pregnant people may not access prenatal care. Because they may miss this opportunity for care, screening for syphilis should be considered in other health care settings. Pregnant patients should be encouraged and assisted with accessing prenatal care to prevent congenital syphilis and improve pregnancy and neonatal outcomes in general.

## Syphilis Screening During Pregnancy

Screen all pregnant people three times. [Pregnancy Syphilis Screening and Treatment Guide](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/screentreatguide.pdf) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/screentreatguide.pdf>)

- At first prenatal visit.
- Early in the third trimester (28-32 weeks' gestation)
- At delivery

**Pregnant people who are not accessing prenatal care and have not been screened for syphilis should be tested in any health care setting.**

## HEALTH ADVISORY: SYPHILIS IN PREGNANCY

Providers should review birthing parent syphilis results before parent or newborn leave the facility, including results from delivery (if not feasible, confirm syphilis test is performed and follow-up is assured).

For pregnant people with signs of primary or secondary syphilis or those with sexual partners recently diagnosed with an STD, providers should screen beyond the three time points.

Test any person at time of delivery for syphilis who is delivering a stillborn at 20 weeks gestation or later.

### Upcoming Training on Congenital Syphilis

In partnership with the Minnesota Medical Association (MMA), MDH will be doing a virtual MMA Physician Forum about congenital syphilis on February 2, 2024.

- [MMA Physician Forums \(https://www.mnmed.org/education-and-events/physician-forums\)](https://www.mnmed.org/education-and-events/physician-forums)
- [Register for MMA Physician Forum - Congenital Syphilis 2-2-24 \(https://ebiz.mnmed.org/DNN/Events/-Events-Calendar/Meeting-Details/productId/284077167\)](https://ebiz.mnmed.org/DNN/Events/-Events-Calendar/Meeting-Details/productId/284077167)

### For More Information

- [MDH Syphilis in Pregnancy and Congenital Syphilis \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/hcp/healthcarewomen.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/hcp/healthcarewomen.html)  
Guidelines for syphilis screening during pregnancy, treatment algorithm, and reporting details.
- [MDH STD/HIV Partner Services Program \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/stds/partnerservices.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/stds/partnerservices.html)  
Once a patient has tested positive, help for informing partners.
- [CDC Syphilis \(https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/syphilis.htm\)](https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/syphilis.htm)  
During Pregnancy and Congenital Syphilis guidance provide evaluation and treatment guidelines for pregnant people and infants.
- [MDH 2022 Minnesota Syphilis Virtual Learning Series \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/hcp/learnseries.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/hcp/learnseries.html)  
Four presentations about syphilis, including one on congenital syphilis.

A copy of this HAN is available at: [MDH Health Alert Network \(http://www.health.state.mn.us/han\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/han)

The content of this message is intended for public health and health care personnel and response partners who have a need to know the information to perform their duties.