



MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

May 24, 2023

Congenital Syphilis a Public Health Concern! New MSDH Prenatal Syphilis Testing Requirements

- **Congenital syphilis is a public health concern in Mississippi!** After a more than 1100% rise in congenital syphilis cases from 2019 (3 cases) to 2020 (37 cases), the trend continued in 2021 with another sharp increase to 64 reported congenital syphilis cases in Mississippi. This led to a 2021 rate of 182 cases per 100,000 live births, ranking 4th highest overall in the US.
- Since 2017 there have been significant increases in primary and secondary syphilis in Mississippi, contributing to increased cases among women of childbearing age and syphilis infections among pregnant women. In 2021, more than 170 cases of syphilis were identified during pregnancy.
- **We need your help!** Congenital syphilis is preventable if diagnosed and appropriately treated during pregnancy. Testing is key both during the pregnancy and at delivery.

Test, Treat, Report (see MSDH Health Alert Messages at [19812.pdf \(ms.gov\)](#) and [19786.pdf \(ms.gov\)](#))

All Mississippi Physicians and Practitioners providing prenatal care are required to:

1. Test

Perform syphilis testing in the first trimester (or initial prenatal visit), the third trimester and at delivery.

2. Treat

Ensure appropriate treatment for congenital syphilis and for syphilis infections during pregnancy per the CDC treatment guidelines [Syphilis - STI Treatment Guidelines \(cdc.gov\)](#)

3. Report

MSDH must have timely reports for awareness, contact investigations and response, and ensure public health measures are in place to prevent further cases!

Syphilis (including congenital syphilis and syphilis in pregnancy) is a Class 1B reportable condition, requiring direct report by telephone to MSDH within one business day after first knowledge or suspicion. Reports should be called to the MSDH Office of STD/HIV at 601-576-7723.

The University of Mississippi Medical Center, in coordination with MSDH, has initiated a Syphilis Hotline to provide syphilis diagnostic and treatment guidance. Providers and healthcare facilities may call the Syphilis Hotline for guidance at 601-815-0538. **This line is not for reporting to MSDH.**

Please call us 601-576-7723 with questions, concerns or to report cases. Thank you for helping us tackle this together.

Regards,

Paul Byers, MD
State Epidemiologist