



Public Health Delta & Menominee Counties



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Date: April 4, 2011
To: Media
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Subject: Immediate Press Release

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Syphilis Outbreak in Delta County

Public Health, Delta & Menominee Counties (PHDM) is reporting a current syphilis outbreak in Delta County. After years with no reported syphilis, there have now been 5 confirmed cases over the past month.

Those who are at high risk of contracting syphilis or suspect they may have syphilis should be tested. Syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can only be diagnosed and treated by a health care provider. PHDM is encouraging local health care providers to increase screening for syphilis, and other STDs, in at-risk populations.

As with all STDs, multiple partners and unprotected sex increase the risk of becoming infected with syphilis. Having a partner with these risky behaviors also increases a person's risk. Syphilis is seen more frequently among men who have sex with men, but both men and women may become infected.

Syphilis is a curable infection caused by bacteria. The primary stage of syphilis is usually marked by the appearance of a single painless sore (called a chancre), but there may be multiple sores. Sores typically appear where syphilis entered the body and may be hidden from view (mouth, rectum, vagina, etc.) A rash on skin or on moist areas of the body, such as inside the mouth, are often seen in the second stage of syphilis. *Syphilis is passed from person to person through direct contact with a syphilis sore or rash.* Syphilis cannot be spread through contact with toilet seats, doorknobs, swimming pools, hot tubs, bathtubs, shared clothing, or eating utensils.

The later stages of syphilis are initially invisible and begin when the primary and secondary symptoms disappear. Without treatment, the infected person will continue to have syphilis and, years later, the disease may damage many parts of the body including the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints. A pregnant woman who becomes infected may pass the infection to her baby and result in death of the fetus or the young infant. All pregnant women should routinely be screened for syphilis as part of their prenatal care.

A simple blood test can check for syphilis. For more information about syphilis and STD testing, concerned individuals may contact their healthcare provider or call PHDM at (906) 786-4111.