

Syphilis & HIV

Increase in co-infections in Oklahoma



Background

- CDC's 2011 STD Surveillance Report shows that primary and secondary syphilis rates are increasing among gay and bisexual men, who now account for more than 70% of all infections
- During the 1990s, syphilis primarily occurred among heterosexual men and women of racial and ethnic minority groups



Background

- According to the CDC, data from several major cities throughout the country indicate that an average of **four in 10** MSM with syphilis are also infected with HIV
- In Oklahoma during 2012, **50%** of MSM infected with syphilis were also infected with HIV



What is the link between syphilis and HIV?

- A person is 2 to 5 times more likely to get HIV if exposed when syphilis sores are present
- Studies have also shown that syphilis will increase the viral load of someone who is already HIV infected



What are the Complications of HIV and Syphilis Co-Infection?

- A Person who is co-infected with syphilis and HIV are more susceptible of advancing to neurosyphilis during the early stages of syphilis.
 - Neurosyphilis is when the infection is in the brain or spinal cord. Symptoms of neurosyphilis include:

➤Blindness	➤Dementia	➤Mental Illness
➤Inability to Walk	➤Weakness	➤Numbness

- May also be asymptomatic

Syphilis

- Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by a bacterium
- Syphilis can cause long-term complications and/or death if not adequately treated
- With timely diagnosis and adequate treatment syphilis is easy to **cure**



How do people get syphilis?

- Syphilis is transmitted from person to person by direct contact with syphilis sores
 - Sores occur mainly on the external genitals, vagina, anus, or in the rectum.
 - Sores also can occur on the lips and in the mouth. Syphilis can be transmitted during vaginal, anal, or oral sexual contact.



What are symptoms of syphilis?

- Primary Stage:
 - The appearance of a single sore marks the first (primary) stage of syphilis symptoms
 - The sore appears at the location where syphilis entered the body
 - The sore is usually firm, round, and painless
 - Because the sore is painless, it can easily go unnoticed.
 - The sore lasts 3 to 6 weeks and **heals regardless of whether or not a person is treated**
 - If the infected person does not receive adequate treatment the infection progresses to the secondary stage



What are symptoms of syphilis?

- **Secondary Stage:**

- Characterized by skin rash and mucous membrane lesions
- The characteristic rash of secondary syphilis may appear as rough, red, or reddish brown spots both on the palms of the hands and the bottoms of the feet
- In addition to rashes, symptoms of secondary syphilis may include fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches, and fatigue



What are symptoms of syphilis?

- **Secondary Stage:**

- The signs and symptoms of secondary syphilis **will resolve with or without treatment**, but without treatment, the infection will progress to the latent and possibly late stages of disease



Latent and Late Stages

- The latent (hidden) stage of syphilis begins when primary and secondary symptoms disappear
- Without treatment, the infected person will continue to have syphilis even though there are no signs or symptoms; infection remains in the body



Latent and Late Stages

- In the late stages of syphilis, the disease may damage the internal organs, including the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints.
- Signs and symptoms of the late stage of syphilis include difficulty coordinating muscle movements, paralysis, numbness, gradual blindness, and dementia. This damage may be serious enough to cause death.



Will syphilis recur?

- Having syphilis once does not protect a person from getting it again
- It is critical that all partners at risk be tested and treated if needed
- If found early enough, a person exposed can be treated before the infection manifests into disease



Syphilis in Oklahoma City area

70% of all cases in OKC area were MSM

Syphilis cases among MSM nearly doubled from 64 cases in 2011 to 108 cases in 2012.

Of the 108 cases:

59% white
38% black

56% were co-infected with HIV

Internet hookups and meth use are common risk factors



What is OSDH doing?

Through Partner Services (DIS):

- 105 partners identified were exposed within the incubation period and preventatively treated before infection
- Among partners receiving DIS intervention, 31 new cases of syphilis were identified



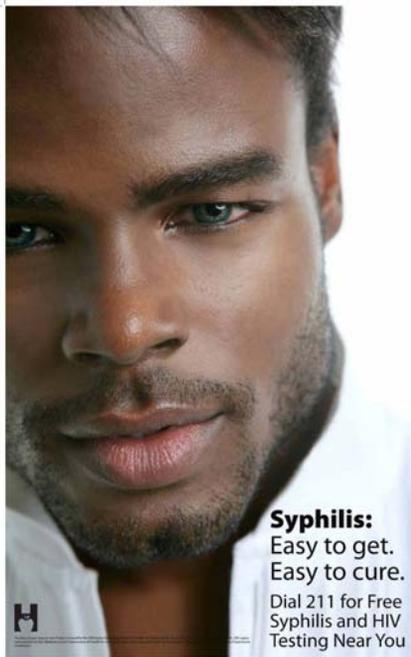
What is OSDH doing?

- STD Nurse Consultant is offering free syphilis screening at Expressions on Mondays from 2:00 – 6:00
- Collaboration with our contracted CBO's for HIV CTR to also provide syphilis screening for MSM



What can you do?

- Educate those at risk about syphilis and the importance of being tested
- Promote the utilization of Partner Services
- Continue to promote safer sex practices and condom use



By remaining vigilant and promoting greater awareness and action, we can turn the tide syphilis and help stop the spread of HIV

