



County of Sacramento

Congenital Syphilis Health Advisory

October 15, 2018

Congenital syphilis in California has reached the highest number of cases in 20 years. Incidence in 2017 was 283 cases, which was a 32 percent increase from 2016. There has also been a four-fold increase among female early syphilis cases since 2013. When left untreated, congenital syphilis can result in miscarriages, severe health problems, stillbirths, or death of newborns. Thirty stillbirths from congenital syphilis were reported in 2017 in California, which is nearly three times as many as in 2016. Sacramento County had its first congenital syphilis case this year.

Testing endorsed by the US Preventive Services Task Force and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is syphilis testing at the first prenatal care visit (HSC §120675-120715); however getting tested once during pregnancy may not be sufficient to avoid grave consequences of congenital syphilis.

Recommendations for all Clinicians:

1. **Implement** the 2015 CDC recommendation and conduct an additional syphilis screening for pregnant women during their 3rd trimester. Women at high risk should also be tested again at delivery.
(<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/CaliforniaSTD-Sxand-Tx-inPregnancy2017.pdf>)
2. **Test** recent sex partners of syphilis patients and treat accordingly. Test any woman who delivers a stillborn infant for syphilis.
3. **Notify** Sacramento County Public Health within one day of diagnosing a case of syphilis.
4. **Conduct** rapid syphilis testing in clinic to prevent lost to follow-up patients.

If you need information regarding screening methods, reporting, and treatment of syphilis cases, please call Sacramento County, STD surveillance unit at (916) 874-2738 Monday-Friday between 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melody Law, MD".

Melody Law, MD, MS, MPH
STD Controller
Cc: Olivia Kasirye, MD, MS, Public Health Officer