

## HEALTH ALERT NETWORK HEALTH DISTRICT 4

### SYPHILIS ALERT FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

Central District Health Department (CDHD) Urges Medical Providers to Consider Syphilis, Especially in Men Who Have Sex with Men

February 27, 2012

Central District Health Department (CDHD) is experiencing an alarming increase in syphilis cases. In the first two months of 2012, CDHD has received greater than half of the total number of cases reported in all of 2011. Over the last two years, there has been a 4-fold increase in the number of syphilis cases compared to the previous five-year average. The cases are occurring primarily in men who have sex with men (MSM) but cases have also occurred in bisexual and heterosexual patients.

Please consider syphilis if a patient presents with:

- Any ano/genital or oral lesion, especially indurated and minimally painful ulcers
- Any unexplained rash, especially with palmar or plantar involvement
- Unexplained lymphadenopathy

Groups at high risk for syphilis include:

- Men who have sex with men
- Sexually active HIV-infected persons
- Individuals with multiple sex partners
- Patients who are evaluated for any sexually transmitted disease
- Sex partners of confirmed syphilis cases

### **Screening & Testing**

For any patients with the above clinical findings *or* in a high risk group, Central District Health recommends ordering both screening (e.g., RPR or VDRL) and confirmatory syphilis serologies (e.g. FTA-Abs, MHA-TP, or TPHA).

## **Treatment and Prevention in the Community**

To stop the spread of disease:

- Seize every treatment opportunity. Consider presumptive treatment if a patient is symptomatic, is a contact to a syphilis case, belongs to a high-risk group, or if follow-up is uncertain.
- Use single dose benzathine penicillin G (e.g., Bicillin-LA), 2.4 million units IM as first-line therapy.
- Call CDHD at 327-8625 to report syphilis.

For more information, call the Office of Communicable Disease Control at 327-8625.

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