

# PROVIDER QUICK POINTS

## PROVIDER INFORMATION



November 27, 2019

### MDH Syphilis Pregnancy Screening Guidelines

The following information was written by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to help inform providers about the increase in congenital syphilis. MDH also wants to educate providers on their Clinical Guidelines for Syphilis.

Rates of the sexually transmitted disease syphilis have been rising in Minnesota since 2013. Of special concern is the rise in early syphilis among women of childbearing age and the increase in the number of cases of congenital syphilis. Babies born to mothers with untreated syphilis can be infected with syphilis and may experience serious, long-term complications. MDH reported 10 cases in 2018.

In 2016, MDH released new syphilis pregnancy screening guidelines and revised them slightly in February 2019. The *Clinical Guidelines for Syphilis* issued by MDH, state that providers should screen all pregnant women 2 or 3 times during pregnancy: at the first prenatal visit and early in the third trimester (28-32 weeks gestation). In addition, many pregnant women should be screened at delivery, especially those with the following risk factors:

- No documented syphilis test result from earlier in third trimester
- No or inconsistent prenatal care
- A sexually transmitted disease diagnosis during the past year
- Current injection or non-injection drug use
- Incarceration during the past year
- Currently experiencing homelessness or unstable housing
- Multiple sexual partners
- Sexual partner with any of the above risk factors

All medical providers who see pregnant women are strongly encouraged to follow these recommendations. It is particularly important that screening happen in the third trimester so that pregnant women can be treated within a sufficient amount of time to prevent congenital syphilis. Interpreting syphilis test results and determining treatment can be confusing, but MDH can provide assistance.

Visit the MDH website for more in-depth information:

[Syphilis in Pregnancy and Congenital Syphilis](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/hcp/healthcarewomen.html)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/hcp/healthcarewomen.html>).