



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Public Health – Women’s & Children’s Health Section
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Michael F. Easley, Governor

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November 20, 2008

To: Health Directors

Attention: Directors or Nursing
Nursing Supervisors
Lead Family Planning Clinical Staff

Subject: Syphilis Testing in Family Planning Clinics

From: Joe Holliday, MD, MPH
Head, Women’s Health Branch

This memorandum was written to clarify an existing Family Planning Agreement Addenda requirement to screen all family planning patients during an annual family planning visit for syphilis “as indicated” by national guidelines.

Screening for syphilis is required for all family planning patients who are **symptomatic**.

Screening for syphilis should also be performed “as indicated” for all family planning patients who are **high risk**. Current national screening guidelines provide a means for identifying patients as high risk based upon the individual patient’s history, clinical findings and place of residence (see Attachment 1). In addition, residents of North Carolina counties with a high number of syphilis cases are considered high risk. Unlike national guidelines for gonorrhea screening, rate specific guidelines for syphilis screening and geographic areas have not been determined. After consultation with the HIV/STD Prevention and Care Branch, the Women’s Health Branch suggests that residents of counties with 3 year averages of reported cases of 2 cases or greater be considered high risk. A list of reported syphilis cases and rates per county is attached (See Attachment 2).

A high risk family planning patient should be screened for syphilis even if the patient has a documented negative syphilis serology within the last six months (Previous guidance - March 1 2007).



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Please remember this clarification affects family planning patients only. All pregnant patients being seen in maternal health will continue to need screening per current guidelines.

Please feel free to contact your regional women's health nurse consultant or a member of the central office staff if you have further questions or concerns. Thank you for all that you do for families in North Carolina every day.

Cc: Kevin Ryan
Evelyn Foust
Leslie Wolfe
Joy Reed
Regional Nurse Consultants

Attachment 1

According to current American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists guidelines, patients at **high risk** include women with a history of multiple sexual partners or a sexual partner with multiple contacts, sexual contact with individuals with culture-proven STDs, a history of repeated episodes of STDs, or attendance at clinics for STDs.¹

According to U.S. Preventive Services Task Force guidelines, patients at **high risk** include men who have sex with men and engage in high-risk sexual behavior, commercial sex workers, persons who exchange sex for drugs, and those in adult correctional facilities. Geographic location is also taken into consideration when considering if a person is at high risk or not for the infection.²

¹ American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. *Guidelines for Women's Health Care: A Resource Manual*, Third Edition 2007 p 201.

² Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. *Guide to Clinical Preventive Services, 2008. Recommendations of the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force*. AHRQ Publication No. 08-05122, September 2008. Accessed on October 31, 2008 at <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/pocketgd.htm>.

County	2005 Syphilis Numbers		2006 Syphilis Numbers		2007 Syphilis Numbers		3 Year Case Average
	Cases	Rates	Cases	Rates	Cases	Rates	2005-07
Mecklenburg	142	18.4	194	24.4	141	17	159
Guilford	68	15.5	75	16.9	45	10	63
Wake	65	9	61	8.1	39	5	55
Durham	15	6.3	34	14	47	19	32
Forsyth	16	5	34	10.4	33	9.9	28
Cumberland	18	5.8	26	8.5	18	6	21
New Hanover	8	4.6	12	6.7	35	19.2	18
Robeson	20	15.8	4	3.1	15	11.6	13
Wayne	5	4.4	15	13.1	17	14.9	12
Nash	3	3.3	16	17.5	15	16.2	11
Johnston	9	6.4	12	8.2	10	6.6	10
Gaston	6	3.1	13	6.6	10	5	10
Buncombe	6	2.8	7	3.2	5	2.3	6
Edgecombe	0	0	7	12.9	11	20.4	6
Randolph	11	8.1	4	2.9	2	1.4	6
Alamance	4	2.9	6	4.3	7	4.9	6
Cabarrus	5	3.4	6	4	5	3.2	5
Pitt	2	1.4	5	3.5	7	4.8	5
Craven	0	0	2	2.2	12	12.6	5
Cleveland	5	5.1	2	2	6	6.1	4
Wilson	5	6.6	5	6.6	3	3.9	4
Orange	0	0	5	4.2	8	6.7	4
Brunswick	2	2.4	4	4.5	6	6.3	4
Lenoir	5	8.6	1	1.7	5	8.7	4
Rockingham	2	2.2	3	3.2	5	5.4	3
Rowan	4	3	0	0	5	3.7	3
Halifax	3	5.4	2	3.6	4	7.2	3
Union	4	2.6	3	1.8	0	0	2
Vance	4	9.1	3	6.9	0	0	2
Bladen	3	9.1	3	9.1	1	3	2
Lee	3	6.1	4	7.2	0	0	2
Davidson	2	1.3	2	1.3	3	1.9	2
Stanly	1	1.7	3	5.1	3	5.1	2
Chatham	4	7	1	1.7	1	1.7	2
Columbus	3	5.5	1	1.8	2	3.7	2
Sampson	2	3.2	1	1.6	3	4.7	2
Catawba	2	1.3	2	1.3	2	1.3	2
Onslow	0	0	3	2	3	2	2
Burke	3	3.4	0	0	2	2.2	2
Franklin	1	1.9	0	0	4	7.2	2
Moore	1	1.2	1	1.2	3	3.6	2
Iredell	1	0.7	3	2.1	1	0.7	2
Yadkin	2	5.4	0	0	2	5.3	1
Greene	1	4.9	0	0	3	14.9	1
Harnett	1	1	1	1	2	1.9	1
Surry	1	1.4	3	4.1	0	0	1
Carteret	0	0	0	0	4	6.3	1
Person	0	0	4	10.7	0	0	1
Stokes	3	6.6	0	0	0	0	1
Granville	2	3.8	0	0	1	1.8	1
McDowell	2	4.6	0	0	1	2.3	1

Scotland	2	5.5	0	0	1	2.7	1
Washington	1	7.5	0	0	2	15.1	1
Davie	1	2.6	1	2.6	1	2.5	1
Duplin	0	0	1	1.9	2	3.8	1
Martin	0	0	2	8.1	1	4.1	1
Northampton	0	0	3	14	0	0	1
Alexander	2	5.7	0	0	0	0	1
Haywood	1	1.8	0	0	1	1.8	1
Jones	1	9.6	0	0	1	9.8	1
Rutherford	1	1.6	0	0	1	1.6	1
Montgomery	1	3.6	1	3.7	0	0	1
Perquimans	0	0	2	16.6	0	0	1
Watauga	0	0	2	4.7	0	0	1
Cherokee	1	4	0	0	0	0	0
Macon	1	3.2	0	0	0	0	0
Warren	1	5	0	0	0	0	0
Wilkes	1	1.5	0	0	0	0	0
Chowan	0	0	0	0	1	6.8	0
Lincoln	0	0	0	0	1	1.4	0
Pender	0	0	0	0	1	2.1	0
Transylvania	0	0	0	0	1	3.4	0
Anson	0	0	1	3.9	0	0	0
Beaufort	0	0	1	2.2	0	0	0
Bertie	0	0	1	5.1	0	0	0
Hertford	0	0	1	4.2	0	0	0
Hoke	0	0	1	2.4	0	0	0
Hyde	0	0	1	18.5	0	0	0
Pasquotank	0	0	1	2.6	0	0	0
Alleghany	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ashe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Avery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caldwell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caswell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Currituck	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dare	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gates	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Graham	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Henderson	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jackson	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Madison	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mitchell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pamlico	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Polk	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Richmond	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Swain	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tyrell	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yancey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	489	5.7	612	7	571	6.4	

Source: North Carolina HIV/STD Surveillance Report, HIV/STD Prevention and Care Branch