



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

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**Public Health Advisory**

**November 9, 2018**

**TO:** North Carolina Medical Providers  
**FROM:** Victoria Mobley, MD MPH  
Medical Director, HIV/STD Program  
**SUBJECT:** **Continued Increase in Congenital Syphilis Infections**

**Congenital syphilis continues to rise in North Carolina. Since 2014, there has been a 360% increase in the number of reported congenital syphilis cases.**

Pregnant women with any stage of syphilis, regardless of symptoms, can transmit the infection to their unborn child if not properly treated. Congenital syphilis can result in devastating health consequences for the infant including birth defects, blindness, hearing loss, premature birth and stillbirth.

**Congenital syphilis is entirely preventable. What can you do?**

1) Perform a thorough sexual health and risk assessment at every prenatal visit.

***\*Nearly two-thirds of the women who delivered congenital syphilis infants in 2017 were negative for syphilis at the time of their first prenatal screen, meaning they acquired syphilis later in pregnancy. This highlights the importance of screening more than once during pregnancy.***

2) Adhere to the [North Carolina Public Health Law](#) which requires all pregnant women be screened for syphilis at the first prenatal visit, between 28-30 weeks gestation, AND at delivery.

***\*Infants who are incubating or infected with syphilis may not exhibit any signs of infection until months or years after delivery which is why maternal testing at delivery is critical.***

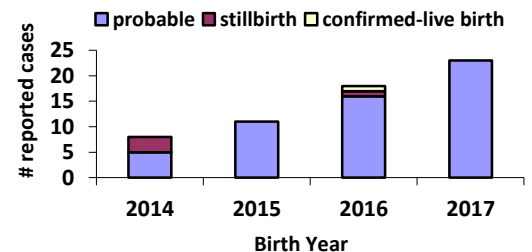
3) Provide the appropriate treatment for the stage of infection, per [CDC guidelines](#).

***\*Late or unknown duration syphilis should receive 3 doses of Benzathine Penicillin G 2.4 million units IM, given 7 days apart. Missed or late doses will require the entire 3-dose series be restarted.***

4) Ensure treatment of all sexual partners of pregnant women diagnosed with syphilis to prevent reinfection. [Disease Intervention Specialists \(DIS\)](#) can assist you and your patient with partner notification. Additional information on congenital syphilis in North Carolina can be found on the [Communicable Disease Branch webpage](#).

For general questions regarding the diagnosis and/or treatment of maternal syphilis infections please feel free to call 919-546-1639.

**Congenital Syphilis, NC 2014-2017**



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