



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Department of Health

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ACTING STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER

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Dear Provider,

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) would like to alert you to continued increases in syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia diagnoses observed throughout the Commonwealth, as well as across the nation, in recent years (see tinyurl.com/vastdreports for Virginia-specific data and www.cdc.gov/std/statistics/default.htm for national data). These infections can result in negative health outcomes, such as infertility, miscarriage, and increased HIV transmission. In addition, enhanced surveillance at the national level and international reports highlight the potential of gonococcal infections resistant to currently available antibiotics. Addressing the rise of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) relies heavily on the work that you do to ensure patients receive CDC-recommended STI screening and treatment. On July 22, 2021, CDC released its *2021 STI Treatment Guidelines* (www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines), which includes revisions to the recommended treatment for gonorrhea and chlamydia, as well as other important changes. This STI Action Kit includes the following resources for your practice:

- CDC's STI Screening Recommendations
- CDC's 2021 STI Treatment Guidelines – Wall Chart
- Taking a Sexual History Guide
- Syphilis Guide for Providers
- Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS) Fact Sheet
- Virginia Reportable Disease List
- Disseminated Gonococcal Infection (DGI) Fact Sheet

Electronic versions of these materials are also available at our provider resource webpage (www.vdh.virginia.gov/disease-prevention/hcw/).

Actions to prevent and control STIs:

1. **Take a thorough sexual history** from all patients as part of routine medical care. See *Taking a Sexual History Guide*.
2. **Screen patients appropriately** for syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and HIV. See *STI Screening and Recommendations*.
 - a. **Screen all pregnant women for syphilis** during the first trimester (within 15 days after beginning attendance) and;

- b. At the beginning of the third trimester (28 weeks) for patients who have had multiple sexual partners within the previous year, those with any prior history of a sexually transmitted disease, and those living in communities and populations in which the prevalence of syphilis is high (Virginia Administrative Code 12VAC5-90-130). CDC also recommends screening at delivery for high risk patients. Pregnant women with an indication for third trimester syphilis screening should also receive an HIV test in addition to the initial HIV test offered in the first trimester.
3. **Treat patients according to the latest CDC STI treatment guidelines.** See the complete *2021 STI Treatment Guidelines* at www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines.
 - a. CDC-recommended treatment for uncomplicated gonorrhea is now ceftriaxone 500 mg IM for persons weighing less than 150 kg and 1 g IM for persons weighing more than 150 kg.
 - b. CDC-recommended treatment for uncomplicated chlamydial infection is now doxycycline 100 mg orally 2x/day for 7 days.
4. **Report suspected gonorrhea treatment failures** to your local health department. **Obtain cultures to test for decreased antibiotic susceptibility** from any patients with suspected gonorrhea treatment failure. See www.cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea/arg for more information on antibiotic resistant gonorrhea.
5. **Report confirmed or clinically suspected cases of DGI** to your local health department. DGI occurs when *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* invades the bloodstream and spreads to distant sites in the body. Infection leads to clinical manifestations like septic arthritis, polyarthralgia, tenosynovitis, petechial/pustular skin lesions, bacteremia, or, on rare occasions, endocarditis or meningitis.
6. **Report STIs as required by state law.** Confidential morbidity reports (Epi-1) may now be submitted online electronically. See the *Virginia Reportable Disease List* for a list of reportable diseases and www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/commonwealth-of-virginiastate-board-of-health/ for information on submitting an Epi-1 online.

Clinical consultations on STI management are available from experts at the National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers, through <https://www.stdccn.org/>. You may also contact me at 804-864-7993 or Oana.Vasilii@vdh.virginia.gov with any questions.

We look forward to your continued partnership in the prevention and control of STIs in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Thank you for your continued efforts to improve and maintain the health of the people in Virginia.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
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Oana Vasilii, MS
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Division of Disease Prevention