

**SYPHILIS  
TASKFORCE ON  
PREVENTION**

# **STOP SYPHILIS**

## **EASTERN REGION ACTION PLAN TO END SYPHILIS**

A Partnership Initiative Lead By Virginia Department of Health and EVMS M. Foscue Brock Institute

# MISSION: STOP SYPHILIS

Syphilis is on the rise in Eastern Virginia. To effectively combat the spread of this sexually transmitted infection, a comprehensive regional plan is essential. This plan must encompass community awareness campaigns, widespread screening initiatives, behavior change interventions, and a focus on addressing the social determinants of health to promote health equity. By implementing a multi-faceted approach, we can partner to work towards eradicating syphilis in our communities and improving the overall health and well-being of the people of Eastern Virginia.

## OVERALL OBJECTIVES Reduce incidence of syphilis and eradicate congenital syphilis

### NOTES:

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### CURRENT SITUATION OVERVIEW:

In 2023, 1,773 early syphilis cases diagnosed and reported to VDH  
323 early syphilis cases diagnosed in CY2024

### FROM 2022 TO 2023:

- Cases overall increased 14.4% (1550 to 1772)
- Cases among women increased 27.8% (223 to 285)
- Cases among men increased 11.6% (1294 to 1443)
- Cases self-reporting substance use increased 72.6% (307 cases)
- During CY2022, there were 163 cases, an average of 15 cases/month
- During CY2023 there were 283 cases, an average of 26 cases/month
- Cases with neurological/ocular/otic manifestations increased 26.0%

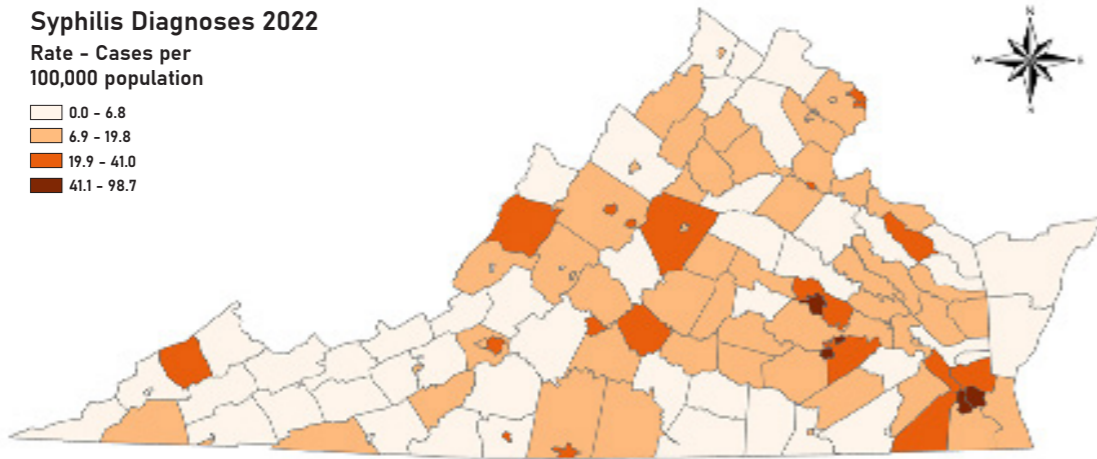


## EARLY SYPHILIS RATES BY HEALTH DISTRICT

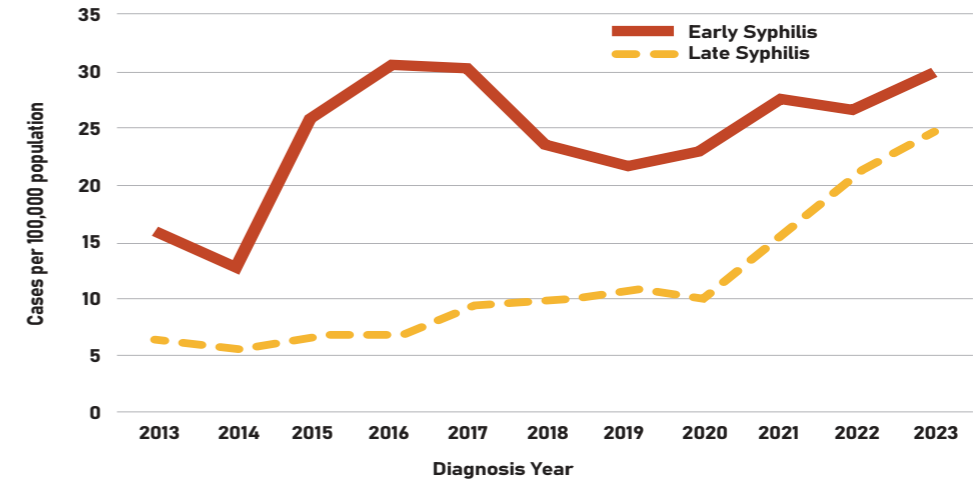
Syphilis Diagnoses 2022

Rate - Cases per 100,000 population

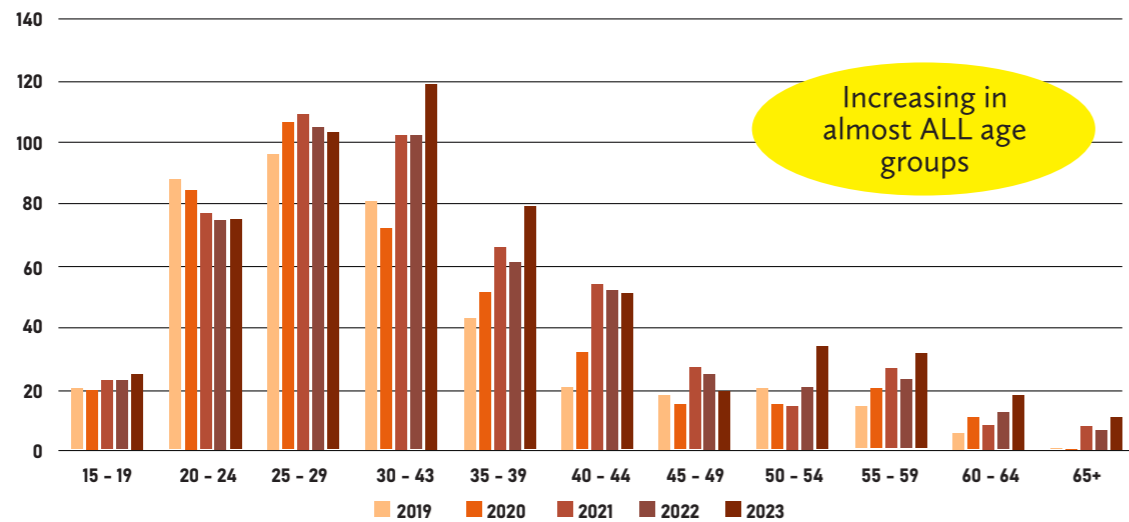
- 0.0 - 6.8
- 6.9 - 19.8
- 19.9 - 41.0
- 41.1 - 98.7



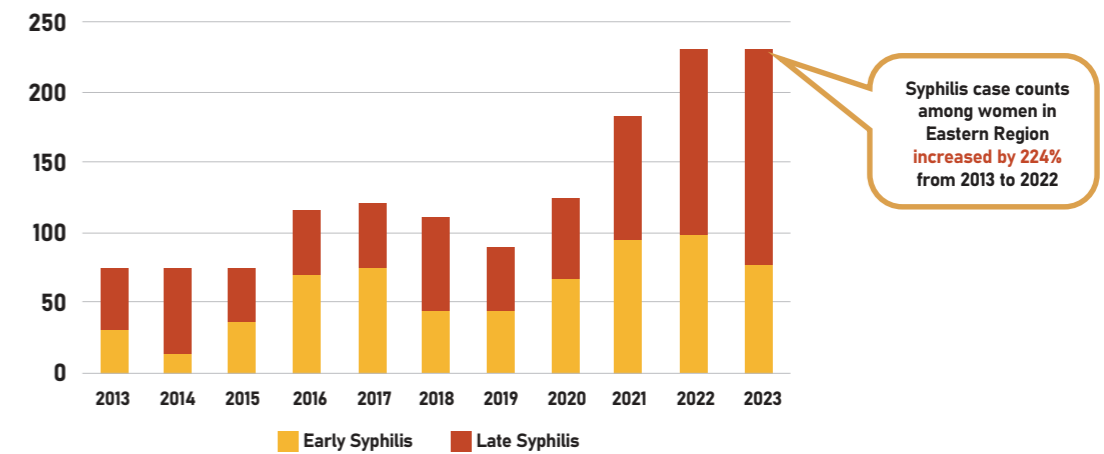
## EARLY SYPHILIS RATES BY DIAGNOSIS - EASTERN REGION



## EARLY SYPHILIS BY AGE GROUPS - EASTERN REGION



## SYPHILIS CASE COUNTS IN WOMEN - EASTERN REGION



### NOTES:

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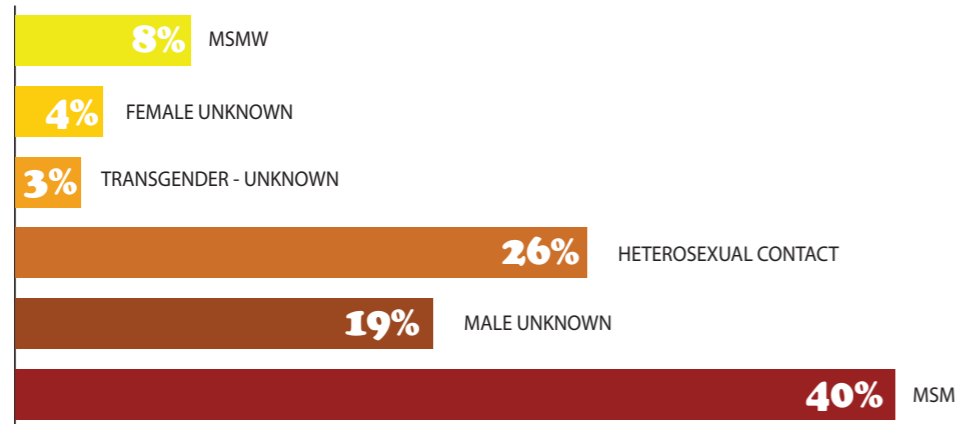
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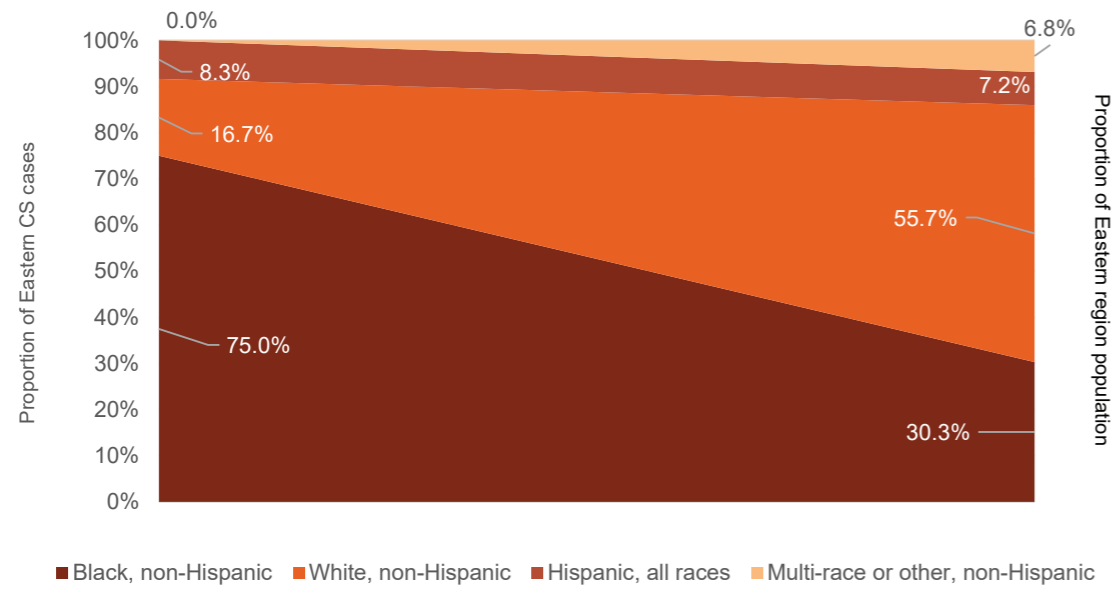
## SYPHILIS CY2023 - RISK - EASTERN REGION



## SYPHILIS 2023 - EASTERN REGION

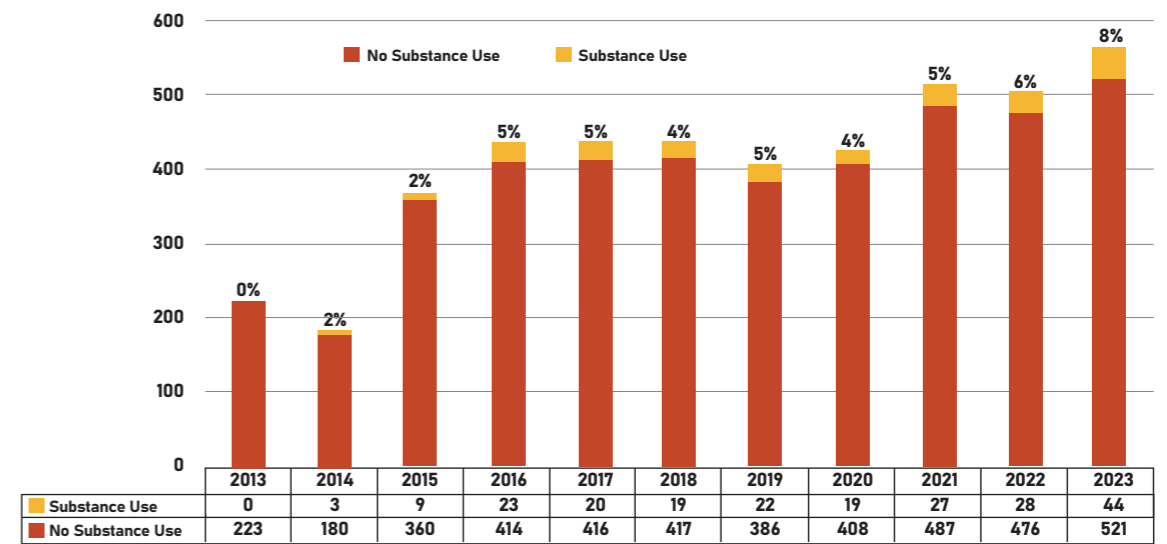
District	Early Syphilis Cases	Late Syphilis Cases	Early Syphilis Rates	Late Syphilis Rate
Portsmouth	70	53	71.5	54.2
Norfolk	161	129	68.5	54.9
Hampton	60	41	43.6	29.8
Western Tidewater	46	37	28.4	22.9
Peninsula	95	61	26.1	16.8
Chesapeake	53	63	21.1	25.1
Virginia Beach	66	76	14.4	16.6
Three Rivers	12	7	8.3	4.8
Eastern Shore	2	3	4.4	6.6

## CONGENITAL SYPHILIS EASTERN REGION - DEMOGRAPHICS



Maternal race/ethnicity compared to total percent share of population, Eastern region 2014-2023

## EARLY SYPHILIS & DRUG USE - EASTERN REGION



### NOTES:

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# SYPHILIS 101

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*. Syphilis can cause serious health effects without adequate treatment.

Syphilis case reports are rising in the Eastern Region of Virginia, following historic lows in the 1990's. Men who have sex with men (MSM) are experiencing extreme effects of syphilis. Case rates are also increasing among heterosexual men and women, among all age groups.

The average time between exposure of syphilis and the start of the first symptom is 21 days. However, this can range from 10 to 90 days.

Many refer to syphilis as “The Great Pretender”, as its symptoms can look like many other diseases. However, syphilis typically follows a progression of stages that can last for weeks, months, or even years. At any stage of infection, syphilis can invade the nervous system, visual system, or auditory system. When a pregnant person has syphilis, the infection can spread to their unborn baby.

Syphilis is simple to prevent and can be cured with the right treatment. Penicillin remains the best drug for treating infection. Doxycycline, another common antibiotic, can also be used in most non-pregnant persons. When not adequately treated, syphilis can lead to visual impairment, hearing loss, stroke, and other neurological problems.

## NOTES:


## ERADICATE CONGENITAL SYPHILIS

**10X**

Over 10 times as many babies were born with syphilis in 2022 than in 2012.

**9 IN 10**

Timely testing and treatment during pregnancy might have prevented almost 9 in 10 (88%) cases in 2022.

**2 IN 5**

Two in 5 (40%) people who had a baby with syphilis did not get prenatal care.

The incidence of congenital syphilis has risen dramatically over the past decade in Virginia, from 3 cases in 2013 to 20 in 2022. Congenital syphilis is preventable if syphilis infections are detected and treated in time during pregnancy. Ensuring that pregnant women receive early prenatal care and appropriate syphilis screening throughout pregnancy is crucial to prevention efforts.





