

Reduce Congenital Syphilis in Your Area



What is Congenital Syphilis?

Congenital syphilis occurs when a newborn contracts syphilis from an untreated infection during pregnancy. It can lead to low birth weight, premature delivery or stillbirth, death shortly after birth, and/or lifelong health issues. Congenital syphilis has increased 10-fold nationwide over the past decade. Maternal and Child Health (MCH) partners, like you, play a crucial role in treating and preventing congenital syphilis. For many individuals, the most significant risk factor for syphilis is living in a community with high syphilis rates.

Cases of congenital syphilis reported in 2023:

3,882



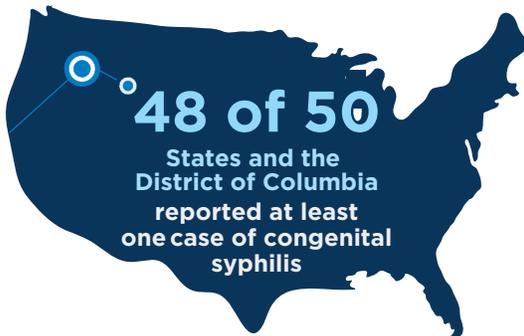
279

were cases of congenital syphilis-related stillbirths and neonatal/infant deaths



Action Steps Everyone Can Take

- **Learn the signs and symptoms of syphilis and congenital syphilis.**
- **Help reduce stigma** by considering geographic risk with individual behaviors. Check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s website to find the syphilis rates in your county.
- **Connect with health care partners** in your community to identify community-based and low-to-no cost testing sites to encourage more testing and coordinated treatment.
- **As a patient, seek prenatal care** and be screened for syphilis during pregnancy.
- **Collaborate with community programs** to remove obstacles to syphilis care, make testing (including rapid syphilis tests) and treatment more accessible, and link people to other needed services.



Action Steps Health Care Providers Can Take

- **Offer syphilis screening** to sexually active individuals aged 15-44 in areas with a high rate of syphilis among women of reproductive age.
 - Use the map and data table on the CDC's website to identify your county's syphilis rates. If the map shows that the rates of syphilis are below the threshold of 4.6 cases per 100,000 people, screen all patients for syphilis based on CDC's STI Treatment Guidelines.
- **Test all individuals for syphilis during pregnancy.** Starting from their first visit, encourage individuals to use rapid tests, if necessary, and repeat syphilis testing at least three times during pregnancy: at the first prenatal visit, in the third trimester, and at delivery.
- **Treat syphilis immediately.** Verify individuals with syphilis and their partners are treated.

Congenital syphilis rates can mirror increases in syphilis



as perinatal transmission can occur during any stage of syphilis

NISH New Insights in Sexual Health (NISH)

This resource was developed by researchers at Child Trends as part of the New Insights in Sexual Health (NISH) initiative, a project funded by the CDC. NISH is an innovative effort to enhance STI screening and treatment, strengthen partnerships, and build capacity for lasting impact.

Our NISH team shares guidelines, tools, and training to reduce STI stigma and promote STI services. Through technical assistance and partnership development, we support organizations to prioritize sexual health, ensuring services are accessible and aligned with people's needs. The NISH team is composed of sexual and reproductive health and health communication experts from across Child Trends.

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Sexual and Reproductive Health Portfolio

Child Trends' sexual and reproductive health portfolio is designed to equip practitioners, decisionmakers, and leaders in the field with research, technical assistance, and strategic communications to strengthen sexual and reproductive health services and systems in their communities. Grounded in rigorous, evidence-based approaches, Child Trends takes a holistic approach to research, ensuring that our findings are actionable, practical, and responsive to the needs of communities.

Child Trends promotes the well-being of all youth and young adults through applied research that informs public policies and builds the evidence base for what works for improving adolescent health outcomes. Child Trends' research is known for its rigor and objectivity. Our expertise spans multiple fields, including early childhood, child welfare, school climate, reproductive health, family formation, juvenile justice, trauma, and youth development.



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If you wish to know more, or if you would like to share additional suggestions, please reach out to Jenn Rogers, program area director and senior research scholar, sexual and reproductive health at JRogers@childtrends.org.

If you would like to stay updated on new resources, free virtual trainings, meetings, and more, [sign up for our newsletter](#).