



Nevada State Health Division Technical Bulletin



Topic: Prenatal Syphilis Screening. SB 304 (2009) New Requirements

Section/Program: Health Statistics and Surveillance/STD Prevention and Control Program

Bulletin Number:

TO: Nevada Prenatal Care Providers, Pediatricians and Hospitals Providing Prenatal Care and Delivery Services

In 2006, Nevada had the highest rate of congenital syphilis in the nation. Despite vigorous public health control efforts, cases of congenital syphilis continue to occur in Nevada presenting an ongoing challenge for the medical and public health community. One response to this challenge was the passage of Senate Bill 304, supported by clinicians and public health authorities, during the 75th (2009) Legislative Session. Senate Bill (SB) 304 became effective on July 1, 2009. SB 304 changes the requirements for syphilis screening of pregnant women from a one-time screening during the third trimester to two screenings, one in the first trimester and one in the third trimester. This change is consistent with the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to screen pregnant women for syphilis in both their first and third trimesters in *areas with a high number of cases of congenital syphilis*. Although the numbers and rate of congenital syphilis have decreased since 2006, Nevada remains a state with relatively high number of cases.

A woman can become infected with syphilis at any time during her pregnancy, and the stage of pregnancy during which she becomes infected is important in the severity of infection that can be passed to her fetus. The severity of congenital syphilis varies and can result in severe and life-threatening physical deformities to the child, as well as stillbirth. By increasing screening among pregnant women to include a first trimester syphilis test, women with syphilis would be found and treated earlier in their pregnancy. This may reduce or eliminate infection spreading to the fetus and reduce or avoid the related complications.



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For information on congenital syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in Nevada, please visit the Nevada State Health Division STD Prevention and Control Program website at: http://health.nv.gov/CD_HIV_STDProgram.htm. For technical questions, please contact the Nevada State Epidemiologist, Ihsan Azzam, MD, MPH at 775-684-4200.

Additional Resources:

Nevada STD data, 2005-2008:

<http://health.nv.gov/PDFs/AidsTF/Resources/CY08EpiAnalysisSTD.pdf>

Southern Nevada Health District report on congenital syphilis:

<http://www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org/download/congenital-syphilis-outbreak.pdf>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention congenital syphilis case rates, 2007:

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats07/figures/f.htm>

Approved by: Mary Guinan
Mary Guinan, State Health Officer

Approved by: Richard Whitley
Richard Whitley, Administrator, Nevada State Health Division