

Syphilis on the Rise - Testing and Treatment Recommendations AND Lyme Disease Update

Attention: Physicians, Emergency Departments, Infection Control Practitioners, Nurse Practitioners, Walk-In Clinics/Urgent Care Clinics, Family Health Teams, Community Health Centres

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The Simcoe Muskoka area is reporting a notable increase in all cases of syphilis over the last three years. In 2018, 2019 and 2020 there were 21, 40 and 56 cases respectively. This represents crude rates of 3.6 to 9.3 cases per 100,000 population in Simcoe Muskoka in contrast to provincial rates reported in 2019 and 2020 of 23.6 and 21.3 cases per 100,000.

Additional statistics can be accessed at <https://www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org/>

Syphilis is spread by direct contact with a syphilis chancre/lesion, which occurs mainly on the external genitals, vagina, anus or in the rectum. Lesions can also occur on the lips and in the mouth. Transmission occurs during vaginal, anal or oral sex. In addition, an infected mother can pass syphilis to her baby during pregnancy or delivery. Lesions are often not recognized as they are painless, thus most transmission is caused by people who are unaware of their infection. If syphilis is not treated early, it can progress to cause complications of the nervous system, cardiovascular system or tissue destruction of any organ. Consider offering your patients a full STBBI screen, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and HIV tests, if they have had unprotected sex with a new partner in the last month.

Treatment recommendations for syphilis depends on the staging of the disease. Public Health Agency of Canada recommends first line treatment with Benzathine Penicillin LA-G. **Short Acting penicillin agents are not adequate to cure syphilis. Benzathine Penicillin LA-G is accessible ONLY through local health units.**

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit provides, at no charge, sexually transmitted infection (STI) medications for treating chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis to clients through their health care provider. **To register** with the STI Medication Program, call the Sexual Health Program at (705) 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 extension 8376. **To report** any suspect or confirmed cases of syphilis to the Infectious Diseases Program at (705) 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 extension 8809 during business hours or after hours to 1-888-225-7851.

LYME DISEASE UPDATE: A recording of the webinar *Lyme disease in Simcoe Muskoka: An Update for clinicians* is now available at smdhu.org/LymeDiseaseWebinar. This webinar reviews the epidemiology and surveillance of Lyme disease in Simcoe Muskoka and provides an update on the management of patients who present following possible exposure to an infected Blacklegged tick, or with suspected or confirmed Lyme disease.

