



# Health Alert



City of Chicago  
Brandon Johnson, Mayor

[www.chicagohan.org](http://www.chicagohan.org)

Chicago Department of Public Health  
Olusimbo Ige, MD, MS, MPH, Commissioner

## **Updated Universal Syphilis Screening Recommendation for Pregnant Individuals**

October 30, 2024

### **Summary and Action Items**

- Congenital syphilis (CS) cases are increasing at an alarming rate across in the United States and in Chicago, IL.
- The [American College Obstetricians and Gynecologists \(ACOG\)](#) now recommends that all pregnant people should be **screened for syphilis three times during the pregnancy**: the first prenatal care visit, followed by universal rescreening during the third trimester and at the time of delivery rather than use a risk-based approach to testing.
- Report all confirmed, probable, and stillborn CS cases to CDPH using the [Chicago Health Information Management \(CHIMS\)](#) provider portal.

**Background:** Syphilis is a preventable sexually transmitted disease that can be easily treated and cured with benzathine penicillin G, an inexpensive and highly effective treatment. Congenital syphilis (CS) occurs when a pregnant person with untreated syphilis passes the infection to their infant during pregnancy. Syphilis can cause permanent disability or death to an infant.

Between 2020 and 2023, the number of reported CS cases increased by 179% (from 19 to 53).

#### In 2023:

- Among 53 CS cases reported to the CDPH.
- 56% of birthing parents were Black; 25% were Hispanic/Latino; 7.5% were White; and 11.5% were Other/Unknown.
- Median age of the birthing parent was 26 years (range 16-44).
- 12% of birthing parents did not have ANY prenatal care.

**Updated Recommendation:** On April 4, 2024, the American College Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) released new syphilis screening recommendations. In the context of the rapidly increasing rates of congenital syphilis in the U.S., obstetricians–gynecologists and other obstetric care professionals should screen all pregnant individuals serologically for syphilis three times: **1) at the first prenatal care visit**, followed by **2) universal rescreening during the third trimester** and **3) at birth**, rather than use a risk-based approach to testing.

**The CDPH Syndemic Infectious Disease Bureau strongly supports syphilis screening during the pregnancy as recommended by the [ACOG Practice Advisory](#).**

**Reporting/Contact us:** To report confirmed, probable, or stillborn CS cases, use the Chicago Health Information Management System (CHIMS) to [submit an electronic case report](#).

#### **Additional Resources:**

- Syphilis treatment is provided free of charge at [CDPH's three STI Specialty clinics](#). These services are available regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.

- A statewide [phone line](#) is available to provide clinical consultation for providers who treat pregnant patients and newborns Mondays – Fridays 8am – 4pm.
- Follow [CDC treatment guidelines](#) for syphilis treatment during pregnancy.