

Syphilis is Up in Colorado. Get Tested.

If needed, Get Treated

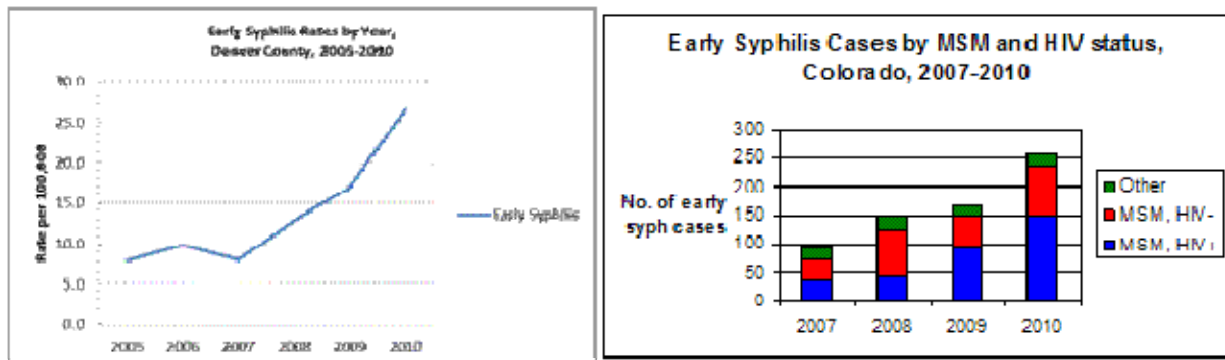


Introduction: Taken & Adapted from Denver Metro Health Clinic

Since 2007, early syphilis cases have increased almost 300% in Colorado.

In 2010, 92% of these cases were identified in men who have sex with other men (MSM).

In recent years, most of these infections have occurred in persons with HIV.



Basic Information about Syphilis:

- Syphilis is an infection caused by the *Treponema pallidum* bacterium.
- Transmission of syphilis results when there is direct contact with a syphilis chancre (sore) during anal, vaginal, or oral sex. The chancre may be on or around your penis, vagina, anus, or lips and mouth
- Occasionally, syphilis maybe transmitted during foreplay; it can also be transmitted to the fetus during pregnancy.
- Syphilis can be cured with appropriate treatment.
- Syphilis is a dangerous disease. Untreated, it can lead to serious health problems, including loss of sight, hearing, brain damage or insanity, stroke, heart disease, and death.

Stages of Syphilis:

- The first sign of syphilis is a chancre sore that does not hurt. It can appear between one and 12 weeks after exposure. You may or may not notice it. It may be where you cannot even see it. After a few days or weeks, the sore will go away, but not the syphilis. It remains in your body.
- After a few weeks or months, you may experience other symptoms, with most people complaining of a rash. Other symptoms you may have include fever, sore throat, new chancres (sores), joint pain, loss of hair, white patches in the mouth, wart-like sores around your anus. These signs will also go away, but not the syphilis.
- Syphilis can last for many years. If it is not treated, it can cause serious health problems.

Syphilis and HIV:

- Genital syphilis chancre sores make it easier to transmit and acquire HIV infection.
- Last year 68% of all early cases of syphilis in Colorado were found among MSM living with HIV.

Testing for Syphilis:

- The only way to know if you have syphilis is to get tested.
- Syphilis infection can be detected by a blood test.
- Free syphilis screenings are available at the following location:
 - HeyDenver, www.heydenver.org 1720 Pearl, Denver, 303.962.2880

STD testing is also available in El Paso County & Pueblo County by calling:

- El Paso Public Health – 719-578-3199
- Pueblo County Health Department – 719-583-4300

Testing Recommendations:

- All men who have sex with men (MSM) should be tested **every 6 months**.
- All MSM who have multiple partners should be tested **every 3 - 6 months**.
- All persons living with HIV (PLWH) not in a mutually monogamous sexual relationship should be tested **every 3 – 6 months**.
- All pregnant women should be screened at least once **at their first prenatal visit**.
- All pregnant women with multiple sex partners should be retested **in their third trimester**.
- All others should be tested according to risk.



Primary syphilis sore (chancre) on penis



Primary syphilis sore (chancre) on tongue



Primary syphilis sore on upper lip



Secondary syphilis rash

Treatment for Syphilis:

- Syphilis is curable. If your test results are positive, treatment is available. Subsequent to treatment, you will need to be tested again to make sure that your syphilis is cured.
- Persons who receive syphilis treatment must not have sex until the syphilis sores are completely healed.
- Sexual partners of people with syphilis must be notified so they too can receive treatment.
- Having had syphilis once does not mean that a person is protected from getting syphilis again.

Prevention of Syphilis:

- Monogamous sexual couples who know they do not have syphilis cannot get syphilis.
- Other sexually active people should take precautions:
 - Know your sexual partners. Do not have sex with anyone who has genital sores.
 - Because syphilis chancre sores can be hidden, it is not possible to know if a person has syphilis by looking at the person.
 - Use Condoms.
 - Consult a medical care provider at the first sign of an infection especially in the genital area

For further Information:

- Mid-America STD/HIV Prevention Training Center www.cdphe.state.co.us/dc/HIVandSTD/maptc/
- CDC 2010 STD Treatment Guidelines: www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/2010/default.htm