



PUBLIC HEALTH

SARA BOSSE  
Public Health Director

SIMON PAUL, M.D.  
Health Officer

## HEALTH ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 22, 2021

CONTACT: (559) 514-4857

[phmedia@maderacounty.com](mailto:phmedia@maderacounty.com)

### Call to Expand Syphilis and HIV Testing for Pregnant Women

#### Situational Update

The Madera County Department of Public Health (Department) requests your assistance in responding to concerning increases in congenital syphilis and risks for perinatal HIV transmission in Madera County. A recent “Dear Colleague Letter” sent out by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) stresses the need to expand HIV and syphilis testing for pregnant women as follows:

#### Actions Requested of Clinicians

##### Screen

- **Confirm HIV and syphilis status of all pregnant patients receiving care or services at emergency departments, urgent care clinics, jails, mental health, drug treatment and syringe services programs, and street medicine or homeless outreach programs.**
- **Screen all pregnant patients for HIV at least once, and for syphilis three times during pregnancy: the first test should be as early as possible (during the first trimester), the second test should be during the third trimester.** Pregnant women who are at higher risk should have repeat HIV testing during the third trimester or at delivery if not done during the third trimester.

##### Treat and Prevent Syphilis and HIV

- **Pregnant women with syphilis should be treated with the recommended penicillin regimen for their stage of infection as soon as possible.**
- **Infants born to mothers with syphilis during pregnancy should be evaluated and treated for congenital syphilis per recommendations in [CDC's Sexually Transmitted Infection Treatment Guidelines \(link here\)](#)**



- **Pregnant women newly diagnosed with HIV or previously diagnosed with HIV but not on antiretroviral therapy should start treatment as soon as possible.**
- **Mothers presenting in labor and Infants born to mothers with HIV should immediately receive appropriate antiretroviral medications to prevent perinatal HIV transmission.**
  - a. For guidance contact either: The Madera County Department of Public Health Ryan White Clinic **(559) 675-7893**, or the Perinatal HIV Hotline **(888) 448-8765** (24-hours, seven days a week)

## **Prepare**

- **Refer all women diagnosed with bacterial STIs (syphilis or gonorrhea) for HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (**PrEP**) which can safely be provided during pregnancy.**
- **Birthing hospitals should have expedited HIV and syphilis testing available 24 hours a day with results available within 1 hour** during labor or delivery for women with undocumented HIV or syphilis status, including women who were not retested in the third trimester.
- If HIV or syphilis results are positive, a protocol should be in place to provide immediate intrapartum antiretroviral prophylaxis (HIV) or penicillin G treatment (syphilis) to the mother.
- Pregnant patients with HIV or syphilis may require intensive case management to ensure that they have access to treatment and care. Contact the Madera County Department of Health (559) 675-7893 to assist with navigation and support services. Preventing perinatal HIV and congenital syphilis are critical priorities for public health in California.

Prevention of perinatal HIV transmission and congenital syphilis can only be achieved if testing and treatment are expanded beyond traditional settings. Thank you for your work to improve the health of all residents of Madera County. Working collaboratively, we can reduce our cases of perinatal HIV transmission and congenital syphilis.

Link to the new CDPH “Call to expand HIV and syphilis testing for pregnant women”:  
[https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DCL\\_perinatal\\_Nov\\_16\\_2021\\_final\\_ADA.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DCL_perinatal_Nov_16_2021_final_ADA.pdf)

---

Categories of Health Alert Messages:

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

**Health Advisory:** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

**Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action

**Health Information:** Provides general health information which is not considered to be of emergent nature

