

Date: 11/04/2018

Dear Colleague

Re: Significant Rise in Infectious Syphilis Cases in Suffolk

We are writing to alert you about a significant rise in infectious syphilis cases in Suffolk. Although the numbers are relatively small, over the past 5 years we have seen a more than threefold increase in diagnoses.

This rise is predominantly in young adults aged 25-34 and is mainly in men who have sex with men, however there have also been cases reported in the older age groups (45 – 64 years). The majority of cases described their ethnicity as “White British” or “White Other”.

We need your help in promptly identifying cases, as well as continued efforts to promote the importance of ‘safer sex’, including the use of condoms for oral sexual contact.

Robust testing, treatment, partner notification and testing/treatment of partners is vital to ensuring this problem is controlled.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Unexplained, usually non-itchy, skin rash (variable but may be maculopapular over trunk +/- palms/soles, guttate psoriasis), or ulcers (genitals, mouth or anus; usually painless but not always), with or without lymphadenopathy. Other oral lesions may include mucous patches on the tongue or snail track ulcers along gum lines. There may be odd or clustered symptoms such as patchy alopecia, Bell’s palsy, hearing or visual change, abnormal LFTs (predominantly raised ALP).

WHAT TO DO

1. If you strongly suspect syphilis, or identify a contact of someone with syphilis, please refer them to the Suffolk sexual health service (iCaSH) for definitive testing and treatment. Tel: 0300 123 3650. Website: www.icash.nhs.uk
2. You can test for syphilis and refer if positive, using serology (brown top clotted tube) for syphilis (and HIV) testing.

Public Health Suffolk

3. Offer routine syphilis and HIV serology with Chlamydia/Gonorrhoea testing as part of routine STI screening.

Please note that it can take up to 3 months after exposure for syphilis serology to become positive – please consider retesting after the window period if the initial test is negative.

Your local sexual health service provider is iCaSH Suffolk integrated contraception and sexual health services. Further information about clinic locations and opening hours can be found by visiting: www.icash.nhs.uk

Appointments: 0300 123 3650

Main clinics operate in Ipswich, Bury and Lowestoft

Many thanks for your assistance with this matter.

Yours Sincerely,



Abdul Razaq
Director of Public Health and Protection
Suffolk County Council



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