

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) reach epidemic levels in California.



- In 2020, the number of reported cases was:
 - 26,110 for syphilis (all stages) - 320% more than 10 years ago
 - 77,823 for gonorrhea - 190% more than 10 years ago
 - 177,266 for chlamydia - 14% more than 10 years ago
- In 2020, STIs decreased slightly from the previous year due to the COVID-19 pandemic but morbidity remains high among both males and females throughout California. Disparities in STI rates persist throughout the state, with the highest among young people (ages 15-24), African-Americans, and gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. Underlying drivers of the increases of STIs relate to a complex web of social determinants of health. Some people diagnosed with STIs have experienced substance use, incarceration, the exchange of sex for money/housing/other resources, poverty, homelessness, and disparities in access to care.

- Syphilis continues to be a major public health problem in California among both males and females, decreasing only slightly in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Persons with syphilis might have mild symptoms or no symptoms and be unaware of their infection, so syphilis testing is essential. Left untreated, syphilis can spread to other parts of the body including the eyes, ears, brain, nervous system, and heart. **This can lead to blindness, hearing loss, changes in mental state, or even death.**
- Persons with syphilis were predominantly male, with most male cases among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM).
- **In recent years, the greatest increases in syphilis were among females.** From 2011-2020, the total number of reported early syphilis* cases increased 1,181% among females compared to 198% among males. Cases of congenital syphilis, which occur when infection is transmitted from pregnant person to child during pregnancy, increased 950% over the same period.
- The number of infants born with congenital syphilis increased for the 8th year in a row.

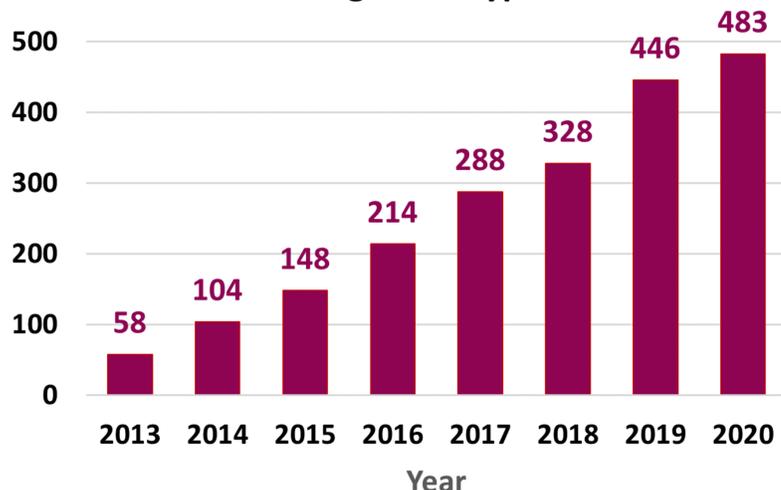


Nearly **7 out of 10** male early syphilis* cases were among GBMSM in 2020.



In 2020, **17% of females** of childbearing age (15-44 years) diagnosed with syphilis (all stages) were pregnant.

California Congenital Syphilis Cases

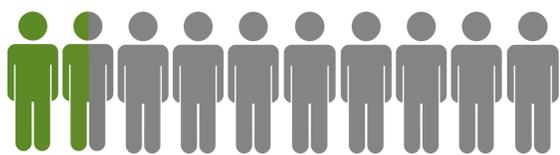


- Congenital syphilis is preventable with testing and treatment during pregnancy.
- Congenital syphilis can cause **severe illness in babies including premature birth, low birth weight, birth defects, blindness, and hearing loss.** It can also lead to **stillbirth and infant death.**
- In 2020 alone, there were 17 infant stillbirths and 30 infants born with other symptoms or complications from syphilis.

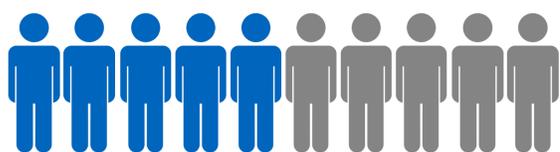


*Early syphilis includes the primary, secondary, and early non-primary non-secondary stages of the infection.

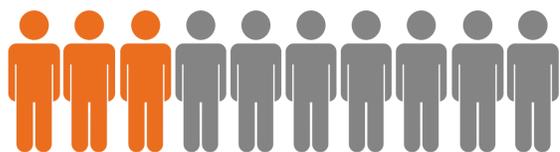
- Chlamydia and gonorrhea are the most commonly reported STIs. While both are curable, they often don't show symptoms and go undetected, which can lead to serious complications, like infertility.
- Chlamydia and gonorrhea disproportionately impact people who are 15 to 24 years old:



Fewer than **2 out of every 10 people** in California are between the ages of 15-24



BUT people ages 15-24 make up more than **5 out of every 10 chlamydia cases** in California



AND they make up **3 out of every 10 gonorrhea cases** in California.

- Gonorrhea is among the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's most urgent threats for developing drug resistance to multiple antibiotics, which would significantly limit our ability to treat gonorrhea successfully.

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- The disparities in STI rates between different racial-ethnic groups are alarming.
 - African-Americans face a disproportionate burden of STIs compared to other groups, which may reflect unequal access to quality STI care and other intersecting risk factors for STIs.
 - Compared to the state average, the rates of reportable STIs among African Americans in California is 40% higher for chlamydia, 180% higher for gonorrhea 120% higher for early syphilis*.
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The good news is that most STIs are preventable and curable. Effective STI screening and treatment are available in communities throughout California.

What can you do to prevent STIs?

- ✓ **Become informed!** Knowledge is power. [Learn about STIs](#) and how you can reduce your risk.
- ✓ **Talk with your partner!** Discuss STIs and STI testing *before* you have sex.
- ✓ **Protect yourself!** Using condoms and having sex with just one person who is also just having sex with you are ways to protect yourself from STIs.
- ✓ **Get tested!** Sexual health is an important part of overall health. The only way to know if you have an STI is [to get tested](#). If you're sexually active, talk with your medical provider about getting tested for STIs.
- ✓ **Protect your partners!** If you are diagnosed with a STI, talk to your partners about the importance of testing and treatment, and collaborate with your local health department to ensure your partner has an opportunity to protect their health and protect you from reinfection.



*Early syphilis includes the primary, secondary, and early non-primary non-secondary stages of the infection.