



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Montgomery County experiences syphilis outbreak

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Montgomery County is experiencing an outbreak of syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease. According to the Alabama Department of Public Health, a total of 115 cases of primary, secondary and early latent syphilis were reported in the county between July 2001 and January 2002. This represents nearly a 10-fold increase over the 14 cases reported during the same interval a year ago.

Early detection and treatment are essential in preventing further spread of the disease. A letter is being sent to Montgomery County physicians to request their assistance in controlling the outbreak by encouraging them to conduct blood tests for syphilis.

Confidential testing, treatment and counseling also are available to the public through the Montgomery County Specialty Clinic. The clinic is located in the Montgomery County Health Department, 3060 Mobile Highway, 334-293-6418.

Syphilis elimination efforts are critical to improving infant health and slowing the spread of HIV infection. Untreated syphilis during pregnancy results in infant death in up to 40 percent of cases. Moreover, syphilis accelerates the spread of the HIV epidemic. The presence of syphilis increases the chances of both acquiring and spreading HIV infection at least two- to five-fold.

“A major area of concern is the number of females of childbearing age who may deliver babies who are at risk of very serious health problems,” said Michael O’Cain, director of the Division of Sexually Transmitted Diseases. “Fortunately, there have been no congenital syphilis cases so far.”

Additional staff have been assigned to expand clinic activities and partner notification. Persons who think they might have been exposed to syphilis should contact their doctor, clinic or the Montgomery County Health Department. Persons can reduce their risk of exposure by abstaining from sexual relations, being sexually active only in a mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected person, or using a condom correctly and consistently.

For more information call your doctor, clinic or the Montgomery County Health Department.

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