

# MEDIA RELEASE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH



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## Syphilis Testing Recommended Free, confidential services available

Erie, PA — Erie County Department of Health strongly recommends community members—including those who are pregnant—who are sexually active and those who share intravenous needles get tested for syphilis and other sexually transmitted infections.

Cases of syphilis have increased 310% in Erie County from 2020 to 2021. There were 10 reported cases in 2020 and 41 cases in 2021. A majority of cases are among those under the age of 30. Among the reported cases, 22% are female and 78% are male.

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) that can be spread through vaginal, oral or anal sex. Syphilis can also be spread through sharing intravenous needles and during pregnancy to a baby.

Syphilis is a bacterial infection that has a range of symptoms from painless sores and non-itchy rash to fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches and fatigue. Genital sores caused by syphilis make it easier to become infected with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), which can cause AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). Left untreated, the severe effects of syphilis potentially include brain damage, vision and hearing loss, dementia, organ damage and death.

Syphilis among those who are pregnant can cause miscarriage or low birth weight for the newborn. Some infants infected during pregnancy may be born with congenital syphilis and, if left untreated, can have developmental delays, seizures or die.

### Free testing and treatment

In its early stages, syphilis is highly treatable with penicillin. Testing results can help determine appropriate care and treatment if needed.

Free and confidential testing and treatment, counseling and support are available at the following sites. *Call directly to confirm respective schedules.*

#### Adagio Health

- 3530 Peach St., Suite 120, Erie; call 814-453-4718
- 118 East Plum St., Edinboro; call 814-734-7600

—MORE—

**Central Outreach Wellness Center**

- 3140 State St, Erie; call 814-619-4009

**Community Health Net**

- 1202 State St. Erie; call 814-455-7222
- 4401 Iroquois Ave. Erie; call 814-464-0509

**Women's Care Center**

- 4408 Peach St. Suite 302 Erie; call 814-868-4050

**Preventing spread**

To prevent the spread of syphilis and other STIs, community members who have possibly been exposed should not have sex with others until they can see a health care provider for examination and receive treatment if necessary.

Other ways of preventing the spread of STIs include:

- Use condoms, especially with new partners.
- Discuss your sexual history and practices openly with your partner(s).
- For those who have been exposed, inform your sex partner or partners that you have a sexually transmitted infection and ask them to get tested.

For a list of locations in Erie County that provide free condoms, visit <https://echiv.org/testing-condom-map/>

For more guidance and information, contact the Erie County Department of Health at 814-451-6700 or [ecdinfo@eriecountypa.gov](mailto:ecdinfo@eriecountypa.gov).

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