



# Genesee County Health Department

Robert M. Pestronk, M.P.H., Health Officer  
Gary K. Johnson, M.D., M.P.H., Medical Director

<http://www.gchd.us>

**Floyd J. McCree Courts & Human Services Building**  
630 S. Saginaw Street  
Flint, Michigan, 48502-1540  
Phone: 810-257-3612  
Fax: 810-257-3147

**Community Health**  
Phone: 810-257-3612  
Fax: 810-257-3147

**Environmental Health**  
Phone: 810-257-3603  
Fax: 810-257-3125

**Personal Health**  
Phone: 810-257-3132  
Fax: 810-237-6162

**Burton Branch**  
G-3373 S. Saginaw St.  
Burton, Michigan 48529  
Phone: 810-742-2255  
Fax: 810-742-2561

**McCree North Health Center**  
115 E. Pierson Rd.  
Flint, Michigan 48505  
Phone: 810-600-2400  
Fax: 810-785-9675

Release Date: For Immediate Release  
Contact Person: Mark Valacak  
Community Health Director  
Genesee County Health Department  
Phone: (810) 257-3812  
RE: Syphilis Outbreak in Genesee County

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) is reporting a current syphilis outbreak in Genesee County. So far in 2008, 33 cases of syphilis have been reported in Genesee County. In 2007, there were 15 total cases of syphilis.

Those who are at high risk of contracting syphilis or suspect they may have syphilis should be tested. Syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can only be diagnosed and treated by a health care provider. The GCHD is encouraging health care providers to identify symptoms of STDs and to increase screening for syphilis and other STDs in at risk populations.

Certain risk behaviors that increase the likelihood of contracting syphilis have been associated with this outbreak. These include having unprotected sex with multiple partners and participating in the exchange of sex for drugs or money. Transmission of syphilis is also being seen among men who have sex with men in Genesee County.

Health officials from the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) have been assigned to work with the GCHD to assist with outbreak control activities. These activities include treating and educating people with syphilis, finding their sexual contacts to provide testing, treatment, and education, and providing support to health care providers with testing and patient follow-up. The GCHD is also engaging in ongoing efforts to distribute information regarding syphilis and its prevention to the health care community, those at risk, and the general public.

Syphilis is a curable STD caused by a bacterium. Syphilis is passed from person to person through direct contact with a syphilis rash or sore. The primary stage of syphilis is usually marked by the appearance of a single painless sore (called a chancre), but there may be multiple sores. Skin rash and mucous membrane lesions characterize the secondary stage. The latent (hidden) stage of syphilis begins when primary and secondary symptoms disappear. Without treatment, the infected person will continue to have syphilis even though there are no signs or symptoms. In the late stages of syphilis, the disease may subsequently damage the internal organs, including the brain, nerves, eyes, heart, blood vessels, liver, bones, and joints. The syphilis bacterium can infect the baby of a woman during her pregnancy. Depending on how long a pregnant woman has been infected, she may have a high risk of having a stillbirth (a baby born dead) or of giving birth to a baby who dies shortly after birth.

For more information about syphilis and STD testing please call (810) 257-3887 or visit the GCHD website at [www.ghcd.us](http://www.ghcd.us).

2 of 2

####