



Date: May 20, 2008

To: San Francisco HIV Medical Care Providers and Clinic Administrators

From: Jeffrey D. Klausner, MD, MPH
Deputy Health Officer, STD Controller
Director, STD Prevention and Control Services

Re: Updated Syphilis Screening Recommendations in HIV-infected Patients

While syphilis rates have declined from their peak in 2004, syphilis remains endemic, particularly among HIV-infected gay men and other MSM in San Francisco. In 2007 there were 361 new cases of syphilis of which 65% were in HIV-infected MSM. Because syphilis in HIV-infected persons can increase HIV viral load and decrease CD4 T cell counts as well as enhance the spread of HIV, routine and regular screening is of medical and public health importance.^{1,2}

The San Francisco Department of Public Health recommends that sexually active HIV-infected gay men and other MSM get a syphilis test **with every routine CD4 T cell count or HIV viral load.**

Persons with newly reactive or a 4-fold increased titer should be treated for syphilis infection with at least one dose of benzathine penicillin G 2.4 million units IM injection. Penicillin allergic patients can be successfully treated with doxycycline 100 mg by mouth twice daily for 14 days.^{2,3}

It is important to remind patients that since syphilis is a reportable disease, new cases may be contacted by the health department to assure timely treatment and to conduct a voluntary interview to elicit and notify recent sex partners or others at risk for infection.

FREE CONSULTATION

Syphilis can be difficult to diagnose and manage for the busy clinician. Please contact Drs. Joseph Engelman or Susan Philip at City Clinic (487-5595, Joseph.Engelman@sfdph.org; Susan.Philip@sfdph.org) or myself (355-2000, Jeff.Klausner@sfdph.org) for any questions or visit www.sfcityclinic.org and click on "For Providers."

References:

1. Buchacz K, Patel P, Taylor M, et al. Syphilis increases HIV viral load and decreases CD4 cell counts in HIV-infected patients with new syphilis infections. *AIDS*. 2004 Oct 21;18(15):2075-9.
2. CDC. STD Treatment Guidelines, 2006.
3. Long CM, Klausner JD, Leon S, et al. Syphilis Treatment and HIV Infection in a Population-Based Study of Persons at High Risk for Sexually Transmitted Disease/HIV Infection in Lima, Peru. *Sex Transm Dis*. 2006 Mar;33(3):151-155.