



INFORME TÉCNICO

Eliminating Syphilis from the United States

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The U.S. has a unique but narrow window of opportunity to eliminate syphilis while cases are still declining.

Why is syphilis elimination in the U. S. within our reach now?

- Syphilis is a preventable and curable sexually transmitted disease (STD).
- Infectious syphilis is at the lowest rate ever reported: 2.6 cases/100,000 population (6,993 total cases).
- Syphilis is now very concentrated.
 - Half of all new cases in 1998 were reported from only 28 countries, which represents less than 1% of all U.S. counties.
 - Counties with high infectious syphilis rates (4.0 cases/100,000 population) are clustered in the Southeastern U.S.

Who is affected by syphilis in the U.S.?

- Communities burdened by poverty, racism, unemployment, low rates of health insurance, and inadequate access to health care. These larger social issues often impact individual behavior, placing members of these communities at increased risk of syphilis. This means that communities of color, particularly African Americans living in poverty, are often disproportionately affected.

Why is it important to eliminate syphilis

- **To reduce one of the most glaring racial disparities in health**
 - The reported national rate for infectious syphilis among African Americans is 34 times higher than that for white Americans.
 - This Racial disparity (34:1) is extreme compared to most other health outcomes including AIDS (9:1), infant mortality (2.5:1), and deaths attributable to heart disease (1.5:1)
- **To decrease spread of HIV infection**
 - Syphilis increases HIV transmission at least 2- to 5-fold.
 - Syphilis in men who have sex with men has been increasing in a growing number of cities across the country including in Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, and Philadelphia.

- **To improved infant health**

- Syphilis transmission from mother to fetus during pregnancy causes stillbirths or congenital syphilis which results in lifelong health problems. In 1998, congenital syphilis was occurring at a rate of 20.6 cases/100,000 live births. The reported national congenital syphilis rate for African-American infants is 56 times higher than for white infants.

- **To strengthen public health capacity**

- Because this disease is easily diagnosed and treated, the persistence of high rates of syphilis is a sentinel event indicating a breakdown in the most basic public health capacity to control infectious diseases and ensure reproductive health. The syphilis elimination initiative will help rebuild this capacity.

- **To reduce health care costs**

- Syphilis elimination will save almost \$ 1 billion annually in syphilis associated indirect costs.

How will the U.S. eliminate syphilis?

- Reduce primary and secondary syphilis cases 1,000 and increase the number of syphilis-free counties to 90% by 2005.
- Provide support to communities to implement five strategies critical to eliminating syphilis:
 - *Cross-cutting Strategies*
 - Strengthened communities to implement five strategies critical to eliminating syphilis.
 - Enhanced surveillance
 - *Intervention strategies*
 - Rapid outbreak response
 - Expanded clinical and laboratory services
 - Enhanced health promotion

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