

Syphilis Screening

CHILD AND TEEN CHECKUPS (C&TC) FACT SHEET FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

In response to the increase in syphilis in Minnesota, syphilis screening is recommended at least once during C&TC visits for young adults 18 and older and recommended for individuals under 18 who are sexually active or have other risk factors.

C&TC standards

General

Syphilis screening (testing) is recommended at least once during C&TC visits for young adults aged 18 and older, using an opt-out approach as part of routine health care.

Additionally, patients under age 18 should be considered for screening if sexually active, if they have had new sexual partners since their last screening, or if they have current or historical risk factors associated with syphilis infection. Finally, people who have an ongoing risk of exposure to syphilis or other risk factors should be screened more frequently.

For pregnant people, refer to [2024 Pregnancy Syphilis Screening Recommendations](#).

Personnel

A licensed health care provider (physician, nurse practitioner, physician assistant) must interpret the results of syphilis screening and ensure appropriate follow up.

Documentation

Document the syphilis screening lab test and a complete record of lab test results in the patient's record.

Refer to the [C&TC Provider Documentation Forms](#) for documentation examples or to use as a template with your electronic medical record.

Procedure

Syphilis serology should be performed. The reverse algorithm is generally preferred for syphilis screening to detect early infection and late, untreated infection (Minnesota Department of Health, 2024). However, either algorithm is acceptable, and local factors should be considered in determining clinical and lab approach to syphilis screening. For information on syphilis algorithms and interpretation, see [California Prevention Training Center's Clinical Interpretation of Syphilis Screening Algorithms](#).

For questions on past and current syphilis screening, diagnosis, or treatment, or to report syphilis cases to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), complete the [MDH Confidential Syphilis Report Form](#) or call MDH at (651) 201-5414. All laboratory-confirmed cases of syphilis must be reported to MDH within one working day.

Importance of syphilis screening

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection that can be effectively treated with penicillin.

Syphilis cases in Minnesota increased by 158% from 2014 to 2023. In 2023, 16% of primary and secondary syphilis cases in Minnesota were among 15–24-year-olds. Syphilis rates in females in Minnesota increased by 437% from 2014 to 2023 (Minnesota Department of Health, 2024).

Systemic barriers to health care have created gaps in diagnosis and treatment of syphilis. Native American populations have the highest nationwide rates (Nicolet, Bhagia, Torve, Tribby, & Poppinga, 2024). In Minnesota, people of color experience higher rates of infection, not due to differences in sexual behavior but due to disparities in health insurance coverage and access to care.

Professional recommendations

American Academy of Pediatrics

Perform sexually transmitted infection risk assessment every visit from ages 11-21. Adolescents should be screened according to the current Red Book (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2025).

United States Preventive Services Task Force

Perform syphilis screening for adolescents and adults who have ever been sexually active (United States Preventive Services Task Force, 2022).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Offer syphilis testing to all sexually active people aged 15-44 years in counties with a rate of primary and secondary syphilis among women aged 15-44 years that is greater than 4.6 per 100,000 people (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024).

Resources

Minnesota Department of Human Services

- [C&TC Schedule of Age-Related Screening Standards](#)
- [Minnesota Health Care Programs \(MHCP\) Provider Manual - C&TC Section](#)

Minnesota Department of Health

- [Child and Teen Checkups \(C&TC\)](#)
- [Letter to Providers: Syphilis Screening Recommendations](#)
- [Syphilis Screening Recommendations for Nonpregnant People](#)

For more information

The Child and Teen Checkups (C&TC) program is administered through a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Health.

For questions about this fact sheet or to obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-3650 or email health.childteencheckups@state.mn.us.

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Resource links

- [2024 Pregnancy Syphilis Screening Recommendations](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/screenrecfaq.pdf)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/screenrecfaq.pdf>)
- [C&TC Provider Documentation Forms](https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/policies-procedures/minnesota-health-care-programs/provider/types/ctc-resources/)
(<https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/policies-procedures/minnesota-health-care-programs/provider/types/ctc-resources/>)
- [California Prevention Training Center's Clinical Interpretation of Syphilis Screening Algorithms](https://californiapctc.com/resources/clinical-interpretation-of-syphilis-screening-algorithms/)
(<https://californiapctc.com/resources/clinical-interpretation-of-syphilis-screening-algorithms/>)
- [MDH Confidential Syphilis Report Form](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/hcp/reportform.html#syph)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/hcp/reportform.html#syph>)
- [C&TC Schedule of Age-Related Screening Standards](https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3379-ENG)
(<https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3379-ENG>)
- [Minnesota Health Care Programs \(MHCP\) Provider Manual - C&TC Section](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&DocName=dhs16_150092)
(http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&DocName=dhs16_150092)
- [Child and Teen Checkups \(C&TC\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/program/ctc/index.cfm)
(<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/program/ctc/index.cfm>)
- [Letter to Providers: Syphilis Screening Recommendations](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/hcp/screenletter.pdf)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/hcp/screenletter.pdf>)
- [Syphilis Screening Recommendations for Nonpregnant People](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/screenrec.pdf)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/screenrec.pdf>)

References

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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, November 12). *County-level Syphilis Data*. Retrieved from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/sti-statistics/county-level-syphilis-data/index.html>
- Minnesota Department of Health. (2024). *STI Statistics - 2023*. Retrieved from Minnesota Department of Health: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/stds/stats/2023/index.html>
- Minnesota Department of Health. (2024). *Syphilis Screening Recommendations for Nonpregnant People*. Retrieved from Syphilis Screening Recommendations for Nonpregnant People: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/syphilis/screenrec.pdf>
- Nicolet, N., Bhagia, A., Torve, M., Tribby, K., & Poppinga, N. (2024). The Epidemic of Congenital Syphilis in the Indigenous and Rural Populations of South Dakota. *Pediatrics*.
- United States Preventive Services Task Force. (2022, September 27). *Syphilis Infection in Nonpregnant Adolescents and Adults: Screening*. Retrieved from <https://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf/recommendation/syphilis-infection-nonpregnant-adults-adolescents-screening>