

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH MOBILIZES EFFORTS TO ADDRESS RISE OF CONGENITAL SYPHILIS CASES IN SOUTH FLORIDA

TALLAHASSEE – The Florida Department of Health (DOH) is taking steps to address the recent increase in congenital syphilis in South Florida. In Broward and Miami-Dade counties there were 21 cases in 2012 - up from 17 cases in 2011. Babies acquire congenital syphilis when the mother has syphilis and the disease is transferred to the baby prior to birth.

“It is unacceptable for even one baby to be born with this terrible disease,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health, Dr. John Armstrong. “We are engaging stakeholders and implementing a comprehensive strategy to inform the public and expand public health services to protect the health of every newborn.”

Broward County faces the greatest current challenge, with 15 cases of congenital syphilis reported in 2012. Public Health officials have identified several key objectives to address the increase. The Department will more than double the number of Disease Intervention Specialists, who provide direct communication with individuals who have been diagnosed with or who have been exposed to a sexually transmitted disease in order to ensure testing and treatment. For women who test positive for syphilis, who are pregnant or become pregnant, treatment services are available that can help prevent transmission of syphilis to the baby. DOH staff members are aggressively educating the public and visiting prenatal care providers and labor and delivery sites in the county to review screening and testing protocols with medical staff.

“We encourage all pregnant women to get tested for syphilis as part of routine prenatal care, both in their first and third trimester of pregnancy,” said Dr. Paula Thaqi, director of DOH-Broward. “Through collaboration with the medical community, partner organizations and local leaders we are fully committed to reducing the occurrence of all STDs in Broward and ensuring appropriate prenatal care and treatment to protect all babies.”

In 1990, Broward had 103 babies born with congenital syphilis. At that time, a concerted effort by public health professionals led to a drastic decrease in cases and many of those same efforts are being reinforced now to address the recent increase.

For more information, individuals are encouraged to contact DOH-Broward at (954)467-4700 ext. 3311. All county offices for the Florida Department of Health can be located [here](#). For more information about congenital syphilis, please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/std/pregnancy/STDFact-Pregnancy.htm>.

Florida Department of Health

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