



Public Health  
England



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To all General Practitioners  
Leeds

Dear colleague

### **Re: Rise in Syphilis cases in Leeds**

We are writing to alert you to a significant rise in early, infectious Syphilis cases in West Yorkshire including a significant rise in Leeds that PHE is currently investigating in partnership with Leeds Sexual Health and the Director of Public Health for Leeds.

In the past year, there have been around 100 cases in the Leeds area. This compares to 30-40 cases in previous years. There are clear links with men who have sex with men, and the potential use of recreational drugs ('chem-sex').

We need your help in promptly identifying cases.

#### **WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?**

Unexplained skin rash (variable but may be macular-papular over trunk +/- palms/soles) or ulcers (genitals, mouth or anus; usually painless), especially in men who have sex with men.

May have odd or clustered symptoms such as alopecia, Bell's palsy, hearing or visual change, abnormal LFTs.

#### **WHAT TO DO?**

- 1) If you strongly suspect syphilis, or identify a contact of someone with syphilis please refer them to Leeds Sexual Health Service (or other local Sexual Health Service) for definitive testing and treatment.
- 2) You can test for syphilis and refer if positive, using
  - a. serology (red top clotted tube) for syphilis (and HIV)
  - b. less commonly via ulcer (herpes PCR) swab sent to LTHT laboratory
- 3) Offer routine syphilis and HIV serology with Chlamydia/Gonorrhoea testing as part of routine STI screening, especially in men who have sex with men.

Your local sexual health service provider in Leeds is: **Leeds Sexual Health**

**Patient helpline** 0113 3920334 / **appointments** 0113 3920333.

**Clinical help/referrals**

Mon-Fri 9-5pm 0113 3920325 / 20328;

Extended hours M-Th 5-8pm, Sat 11-3pm call 07710027063

email [shs.leeds@nhs.net](mailto:shs.leeds@nhs.net) or fax 0113 3920316

For more information about services provided and clinic details, please visit

[www.leedssexualhealth.com](http://www.leedssexualhealth.com)

Leeds Sexual Health will assess and arrange care via any of the hub or spoke clinics at any of their times of opening. Syphilis is only treated at the city centre Hub clinic at the Merrion centre with off-licence Penicillin preparations requiring specialist input.

Robust testing, treatment, contact tracing and partner notification is vital to ensuring this problem is controlled.

Many thanks for your assistance with this matter.

Yours sincerely



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