



Bulletin No. 3
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ALASKA'S GONORRHEA AND SYPHILIS RATES CONTINUE TO FALL

Alaska's civilian gonorrhea rate decreased in 1984 for the seventh consecutive year!!! The number of reported cases of civilian gonorrhea has fallen from 5,183 cases in 1977 to 2,933 cases in 1984. Alaska's gonorrhea rate (number of cases per 100,000 population) now is only 45% as high as it was in 1977. Our gonorrhea rate (600.6) represents a 7.4 % decrease from 1983's gonorrhea rate (648.6) and is lower than at any time since 1970.

These successes are even more dramatic considering Alaska's young population (median age 26.3 years). While many factors have played important roles in the decline in Alaska's gonorrhea rate, much of the decline can be attributed to the multifaceted Statewide Gonorrhea Control Program coordinated by the Sexually Transmissible Disease Program, Section of Communicable Disease Control, Division of Public Health. The decline in the rate of gonorrhea in Alaska has resulted in tremendous cost savings and has prevented considerable human suffering.

Since 1977, the civilian population of Alaska has increased from 386,227 to 488,293. Had the rate of gonorrhea remained at the 1977 level in each year from 1978 through 1984, 12,041 more cases of gonorrhea would have occurred than actually did occur. The cost of treating a case of uncomplicated gonorrhea is approximately \$77. Of women who acquire gonorrhea, 10% will develop pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). The cost of treating a case of PID is estimated to be \$2,600.

Had the rate of gonorrhea remained at the 1977 level for each year between 1978 and 1984, 12,041 additional cases of gonorrhea would have occurred, (6,719 males, 5,322 females), and 532 of the women would have developed PID. The medical costs to treat these 12,041 cases of gonorrhea and 532 cases of PID would have been \$2,269,393. These projected medical costs do not include additional costs for lost days of work and school or the emotional, physical, and psychological sufferings that also were prevented.

In addition to our spectacular success in reducing the incidence of gonorrhea, 1984 marked the lowest reported civilian total of syphilis cases in Alaska. Only 37 civilian cases were reported in 1984, a rate of 7.6 cases per 100,000 population. Alaska's syphilis rate is one of the lowest in the nation. No cases of congenital syphilis have been reported in Alaska since 1979. (Reported by Tom Kelly, STD Control Program Coordinator, Section of Communicable Disease Control, Division of Public Health.)

DPT VACCINE SHORTAGE CONTINUES

The National Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has stated that the DPT vaccine shortage may continue through 1985. While many physicians, other health care providers, and the Division of Public Health's Immunization Program have recently received shipments of vaccine, inventories are still low. The Immunization Program currently has about a month's supply on hand. However, some private physicians have been unable to obtain vaccine for some time. The Immunization Program does not know when the next shipment will arrive or how much vaccine it will contain. Therefore, until both public and private health care providers are receiving adequate supplies of vaccine and CDC notifies us that national supplies are adequate to resume giving the fourth and fifth doses, the Division of Public Health, in cooperation with the Alaska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, requests that all health care providers continue to delay the administration of the fourth and fifth doses.

The Alaska Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics has asked the Immunization Office to coordinate the dissemination of information pertaining to vaccine supplies and provide written notification when administration of the fourth and fifth doses can be resumed. We will keep you posted. Please direct all questions regarding availability of DPT vaccine to Ned Rasmussen, Coordinator, Immunization Program, Section of Communicable Disease Control, Anchorage, 561-4233.