

Test gets almost 1 in 5 syphilis cases wrong

February 10 2011, By MIKE STOBBE , AP Medical Writer

(AP) -- Health officials say hundreds of people may have been told they have syphilis when they don't.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) says a study of five U.S. labs shows about 18 percent of the positive results from a test method used since the 1980s were actually negative.

People who test positive for [syphilis](#) are usually given penicillin, which can have side effects for some people. The test is given to all [pregnant women](#) and people considered high-risk for sexually transmitted diseases.

It's not clear how widely used the problematic test is versus another method. The CDC recommends a second test when there's a positive result. Only about 14,000 Americans have the most contagious forms of syphilis.

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