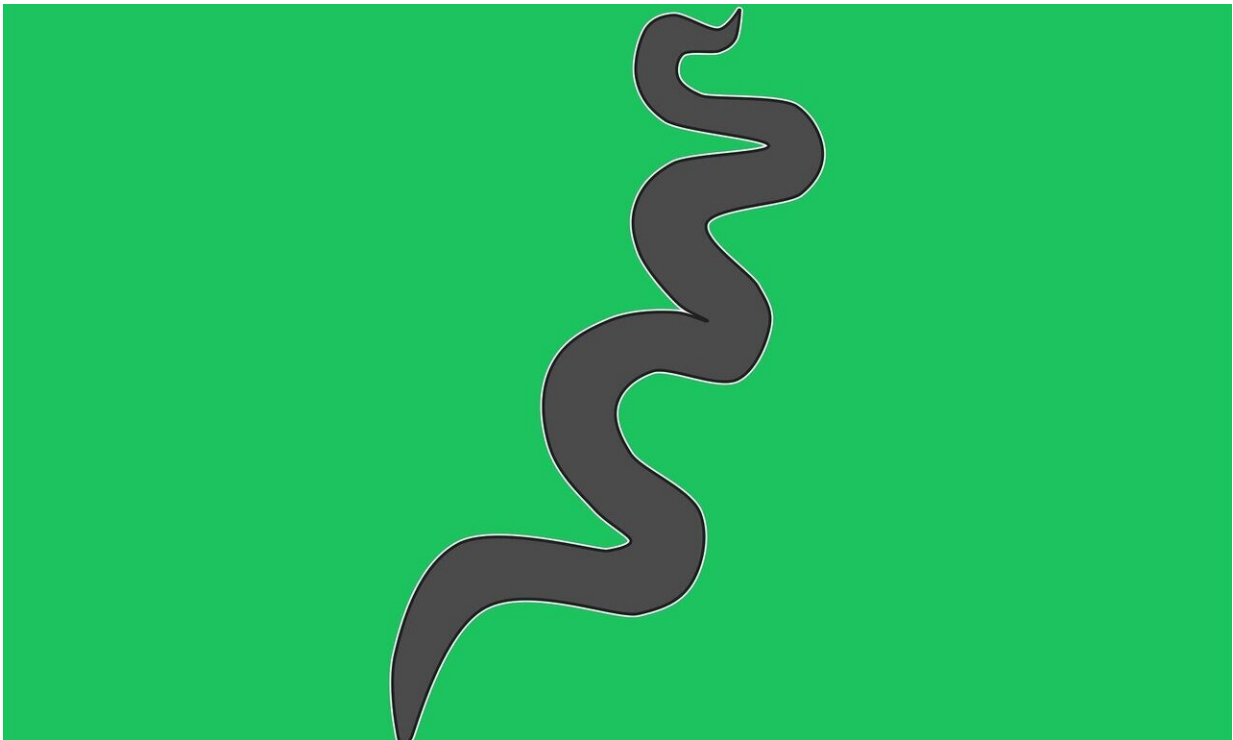


Concerning rise in syphilis cases across Minnesota

July 6 2022



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The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is raising a red flag over what it says was a sharp rise in syphilis cases across the state in 2021, according to an annual report of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV data.

According to MDH, the increase in syphilis cases in the state mirrors a disturbing national trend of starkly rising syphilis cases, affecting all communities. Of special concern was a syphilis outbreak in the Duluth area and a sustained increase in cases in two northern Minnesota counties.

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*. Dr. Stacey Rizza, an [infectious diseases](#) specialist at Mayo Clinic, says syphilis affects men and women—and can present in various stages.

"Primary syphilis causes an ulcer, and this sometimes isn't noticed because it's painless and can be inside the vagina or on the cervix. After a few weeks, two months, they can get secondary syphilis, which is a rash."

It may then progress to latent-stage syphilis and, finally, the most serious stage: tertiary.

Pregnant women are not immune to syphilis. Congenital syphilis can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth or infant deaths. That's why all [pregnant women](#) should be screened.

Syphilis is preventable and treatable. Since the 1940s, penicillin has been the best treatment. As for prevention, Dr. Rizza recommends barrier protection during sex—including oral, anal and vaginal sex.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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