

Two cases of new drug-resistant gonorrhea strain reported in Massachusetts

January 20 2023, by Cara Murez and Robin Foster



Two cases of a new strain of gonorrhea reported in Massachusetts were

at least partly resistant to several antibiotics, state officials announced Thursday.

"The discovery of this strain of gonorrhea is a serious public health concern which DPH [Department of Health], the CDC and other [health departments](#) have been vigilant about detecting," Margret Cooke, head of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, said in a [statement](#). "We urge all sexually active people to be regularly tested for sexually transmitted infections and to consider reducing the number of their sexual partners and increasing their use of condoms when having sex."

The patients in the two Massachusetts cases did improve after getting injections of the primary drug currently recommended for the [sexually transmitted disease](#), ceftriaxone.

Massachusetts health officials are now working with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to test other samples from other gonorrhea cases in the state.

The state is also tracing contacts to see if the strain has spread further.

The two cases don't have a direct connection to each other. One case was found in a patient who had symptoms of urethritis, or difficulty urinating. Of the two cases, one had no recent travel history, so the strain may be spreading within the state, CBS News reported.

Gonorrhea can spread without symptoms. In others, it can cause bleeding, pain and discharge. Serious complications can lead to infertility. It's common, trailing only behind chlamydia in number of cases, according to the [CDC](#).

Agency officials have long been concerned about [drug resistance](#) with this bacteria, [calling](#) gonorrhea one of three most urgent threats back in

2013.

"This case is a reminder that antimicrobial-resistant gonorrhea remains an urgent public health threat nationally and internationally; all providers in all [clinical settings](#) need to remain vigilant," Dr. Laura Hinkle Bachmann, chief medical officer of the CDC Division of STD Prevention, said Thursday in a letter to providers, CBS News reported.

When the CDC tested drugs against the strain found in Massachusetts, only one had no signs of reduced effectiveness. That was gentamicin, which is already considered less effective against gonorrhea.

Another potentially promising drug is being tested in [clinical trials](#), but zoliflodacin has not yet been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for gonorrhea, CBS News reported.

"Timely identification and treatment, as well as rapid public health response, are essential to keeping patients safe and reducing the risk of community transmission. We must all remain alert for potential gonococcal treatment failures as we combat the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance," Bachmann said in the provider letter.

More information: The National Library of Medicine has more on [gonorrhea](#).

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