Increase in Infectious Syphilis ALERT
for services in Far West, Murrumbidgee, and Western NSW LHDs

Increase in infectious syphilis notifications in the Mildura Local Government Area (LGA)
- Notifications of infectious syphilis have increased in the Mildura LGA, with 22 notifications from 1 January 2019 to 6 November 2019. Of these, 70% were in women.
- No localised increase in notifications has been observed on the NSW side of the border. However, the geographical proximity of Mildura puts western and southern NSW at a heightened risk of syphilis.

Maintain a high clinical suspicion for syphilis in all population groups
- Primary syphilis may present with a painless ulcer at the site of infection.
- Secondary syphilis usually involves a rash and non-specific symptoms such as fever, malaise, lymphadenopathy.
- Many people with syphilis do not present with symptoms.

Test widely and consider repeat testing in pregnancy
- Test for syphilis in persons diagnosed with an STI or presenting as a contact of a person with an STI.
- Test as part of routine STI checks for all sexually active people, during health assessments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (MBS item 715), and opportunistically.
- Test pregnant women at the first antenatal visit, and again at 24-28 weeks gestation if considered at risk of infection or uncertain of risk. All Aboriginal women and other pregnant women whose baby will be identified as Aboriginal should routinely receive a second syphilis antenatal test at 24-28 weeks.

Treat promptly and consider stocking benzathine penicillin
- Treat infectious syphilis promptly with benzathine penicillin 2.4 million units (equivalent to 1.8 g-usually two full pre-filled syringes) IMI stat. For late latent syphilis and syphilis of unknown duration, three doses are required (i.e. benzathine penicillin 2.4 million units weekly for 3 weeks).
- To facilitate timely treatment in general practice, consider ordering Bicillin L-A in advance through the Emergency Drug Supply Schedule (Prescribers Bag; listed 1 September 2019).

Ensure testing and treatment of all sexual contacts
- Treat all sexual contacts without waiting for test results. For primary syphilis treat and test all sexual partners in the previous 3 months; for secondary syphilis, treat and test all sexual partners in the previous 6 months.
- Inform the local Public Health Unit (1300 066 055) of cases who report sexual partners in Victoria.

Specialist services are available to provide assistance
- Seek advice from local sexual health services:
  - Far West LHD: Jo Lenton, Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Consultant, (08) 8080 1100/0402 121 249 (Mon-Thu)
  - Murrumbidgee LHD: Alison Kincaid, Sexual Health Clinical Nurse Consultant, 0427 452 059 (Mon-Fri)
  - Western NSW LHD: Kim Grant, Clinical Nurse Consultant, (02) 6330 5935/0477 718 116 (Mon-Thu 07:00-17:30)

The NSW Sexual Health Info Link (1800 451 624/www.shil.nsw.gov.au) can assist, including with online contacts.

Resources & further information
- The Australasian Contact Tracing Guidelines, including links to anonymous online partner notification services are available at http://contacttracing.ashm.org.au.

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