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Please copy and distribute to ALL physicians at your location.

## Health Alert: Reports of Disseminated Gonococcal Infection (DGI)

This health alert updates local health providers about recent cases of disseminated gonococcal infection (DGI) in Ventura County and provides recommendations regarding the management and reporting of DGI. As of 11/5/2020, five confirmed cases and one probable case of disseminated gonococcal infection (DGI) have been diagnosed in Ventura County.

In recent months, California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has also received increasing reports of disseminated gonococcal infection (DGI), an uncommon but severe complication of untreated gonorrhea. DGI is thought to occur in 0.5-3% of untreated gonorrhea cases. DGI occurs when the sexually transmitted pathogen *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* invades the bloodstream and spreads to distant sites in the body, leading to clinical findings such as septic arthritis, polyarthralgia, tenosynovitis, petechial/pustular skin lesions, bacteremia, or, on rare occasions, endocarditis or meningitis.

Cultures from disseminated sites of infection are often negative and mucosal sites of infection (e.g. urogenital, rectal, or pharyngeal) are often asymptomatic and not tested before empiric antimicrobial treatment is started despite having a higher diagnostic yield. As a result, DGI is usually a clinical diagnosis without microbiologic confirmation, which likely contributes to underdiagnosis and treatment delays.

### Recommendations for Providers

If there is clinical suspicion for DGI

- Nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT) and culture specimens from urogenital and extragenital (e.g., pharyngeal and rectal) mucosal site(s), as applicable, should be collected and processed, in addition to culture specimens from disseminated sites of infection (e.g., skin, synovial fluid, blood, or cerebrospinal fluid).
- Management of DGI cases should be guided by the [CDC STD Treatment Guidelines](#). Hospitalization and consultation with an infectious disease specialist are recommended for initial therapy.
- Providers should instruct patients to refer sex partners with whom they have had sexual contact in the past 60 days for evaluation, testing, and presumptive treatment for *gonorrhoeae*.
- Report all laboratory confirmed and clinically suspected cases of DGI to Ventura County Public Health (VCPH) Communicable Disease Office within 24 hours of identification: Phone (805)981-5201 / Fax (805)981-5200.
- All *gonorrhoeae* isolates in DGI cases should be tested for antimicrobial susceptibility, which requires culture. Please contact **VCPH Communicable Disease Office at (805)981-5201** for guidance and approval to send specimens to the State lab for additional testing.
- Continue to screen, test, and treat for STDs per the [CDC STD Treatment Guidelines](#). When facility-based and in-person clinical services are limited, follow guidance from the [CDC dear colleague letter](#) on STD care and prevention during disruption of clinical services due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Obtaining a behavioral risk assessment, including a nonjudgmental sexual history, providing STD/HIV prevention counseling, and appropriately treating patients and their sex partners are all necessary to interrupt disease transmission.
- ***CDC is interested in receiving all clinical isolates from DGI cases for additional testing. Please work with your laboratory facility to ensure all available isolates from DGI cases are not discarded and are sent to Ventura***

### Communicable Disease Office

2220 e. Gonzales Rd. Suite 202, Oxnard, California 93036 • (805) 981-5201 • FAX (805) 981-5200

**County Public Health Laboratory (VCPHL). Contact VCPH Communicable Disease Office to arrange transfer of laboratory samples to the VCPHL.**

## Resources

Ventura County Public Health Website: <http://www.vchca.org/agency-divisions/public-health>

Ventura County Confidential Morbidity Report Form:

[http://www.vchca.org/images/public\\_health/For\\_Hlth\\_Care\\_Providers/CMR\\_2020-11-05\\_RE.pdf](http://www.vchca.org/images/public_health/For_Hlth_Care_Providers/CMR_2020-11-05_RE.pdf)

2015 CDC STD Treatment Guidelines, "Gonococcal Infections": <https://www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/gonorrhea.htm>

The STD Treatment (Tx) Guidelines mobile app is free and available for [Apple devices](#) and [Android devices](#)

Dear Colleague Letter: STD Care and Prevention Guidance During Disruption of Clinical Services due to the COVID-19 pandemic (April 6, 2020): <https://www.cdc.gov/std/dstdp/DCL-STDTreatment-COVID19-04062020.pdf>

Guidance for obtaining a sexual history is available on the CDC Division of STD Prevention resource page: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/resources.htm>

National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers STD Clinical Consultation Network <https://www.stdccn.org/external icon>

Recommendations for the Laboratory-Based Detection of *C. trachomatis* and *N. gonorrhoeae* – 2014 <https://www.cdc.gov/std/laboratory/2014labrec/default.htm>

National STD Curriculum <https://www.std.uw.edu/external icon>

STD Prevention Resources [https://www.cdc.gov/std/publications/STDPreventionResources\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/std/publications/STDPreventionResources_WEB.pdf)

California Department of Public Health STD Control Branch: <http://www.std.ca.gov/>

- Gonorrhea page: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Gonorrhea.aspx>

CDC Dear Colleague Letter - Increasing Reports of DGI:

[https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DGI\\_Dear\\_Colleague\\_Letter.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DGI_Dear_Colleague_Letter.pdf)

Disseminated Gonococcal Infection Working Case Definition:

[https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DGI\\_Case\\_Definition.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DGI_Case_Definition.pdf)

Instructions for Shipping Disseminated Gonorrhea Infection Isolates to CDC:

[https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DGI\\_Isolate\\_Shipping\\_Instructions.pdf](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DGI_Isolate_Shipping_Instructions.pdf)

CDC DGI Case Reporting form: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/program/outbreakresources/DGICaseReportingForm-508.pdf>

CDC Health Alert Template for DGI: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/program/outbreakresources/HANtemplate-dgi.htm>

This bulletin is intended to improve the public health in our county by keeping physicians and nurses informed of noteworthy diagnoses, disease trends and other events of medical interest. Another goal of a public health department is to educate. We hope that you will use this information to increase your awareness. Please allow us to continue in our role of speaking to the press so that we may maximize the educational message to the benefit of all citizens of Ventura County.

**Communicable Disease Office**

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