

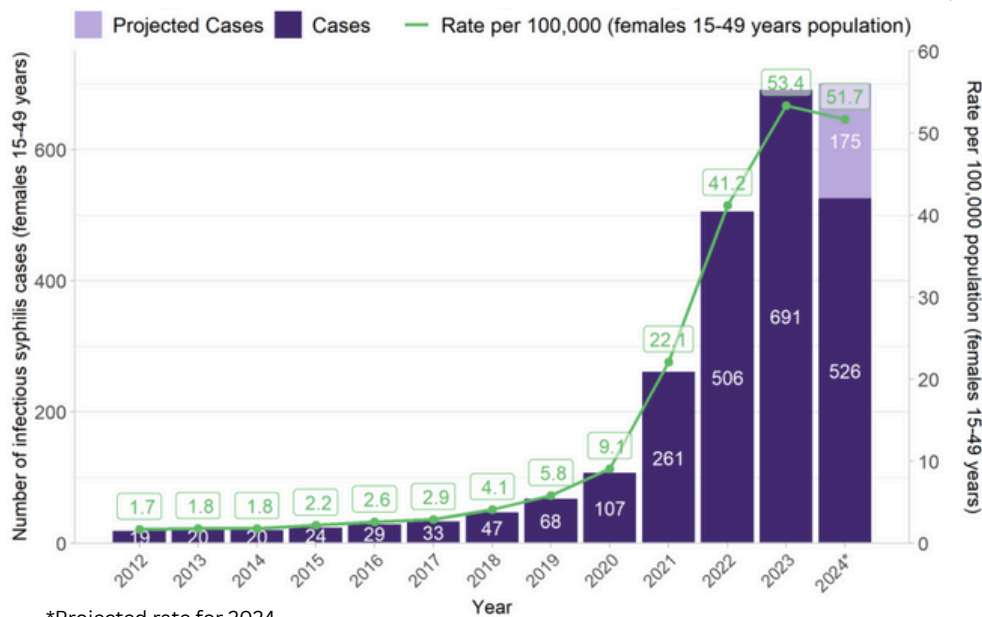
# SYPHILIS IN PREGNANCY CRISIS

In British Columbia and across Canada



The rate of infectious syphilis in females increased by **256%** from 2018 to 2022 in Canada.<sup>1</sup> In BC, rates of infectious syphilis in reproductive age females have also drastically increased over this time period.

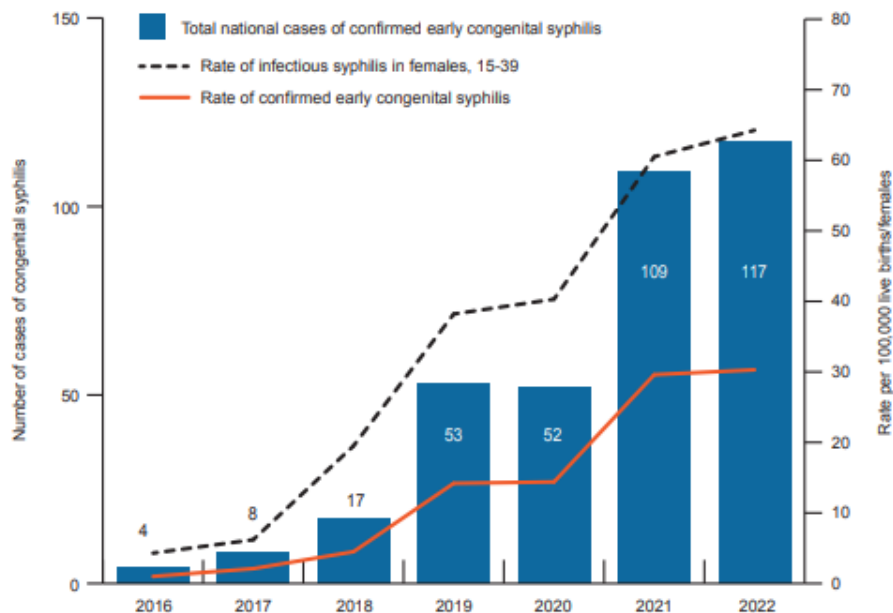
## INFECTIOUS SYPHILIS CASE REPORTS IN BC AMONG FEMALES 15-49 YEARS, 2012-2024\*<sup>2</sup>



\*Projected rate for 2024

With this increase in cases of syphilis in reproductive age females, rates of early congenital syphilis have also risen dramatically across Canada, increasing by **599%** from 2018 to 2022.<sup>1</sup>

## NUMBER OF REPORTED CASES AND RATES OF CONFIRMED EARLY CONGENITAL SYPHILIS AND RATES AMONG FEMALES AGED 15-39 YEARS IN CANADA, FROM 2016 TO 2022<sup>1</sup>



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If someone has a syphilis infection while they are pregnant, they can pass the infection to their fetus/infant. The chance of passing the infection to the infant is higher when the pregnant person gets a new syphilis infection during their pregnancy (primary or secondary infection), particularly in the third trimester.<sup>3</sup>

Although some factors including sexual contact with multiple partners, a history of other STBBIs and living experience of substance use disorder or unstable housing can increase the likelihood, **anyone may experience syphilis infection during their pregnancy.**<sup>4</sup>

## Untreated syphilis infection in pregnancy can result in:<sup>5</sup>

- miscarriage
- stillbirth
- neonatal death
- preterm birth
- low birth weight
- an infant born with congenital syphilis

## Long-term impacts of untreated congenital syphilis include:<sup>4</sup>

- skeletal malformations
- hearing loss
- neurological complications
  - seizures
  - paralysis
- ocular complications
  - optic atrophy
  - interstitial keratitis
- developmental delay

Congenital syphilis can be prevented by performing syphilis testing and treatment **early in pregnancy.** It is vital that all pregnant people are screened for syphilis. Screening is routinely performed as part of standard prenatal bloodwork at the first prenatal visit and at delivery, but pregnant people who may be at risk for syphilis infection can request to be tested **at any time.**

**If your patient is diagnosed with syphilis in pregnancy, contact Oak Tree Clinic**  
phone: 604 875 2212 / fax: 604 875 3063

For more information and resources about syphilis in pregnancy and congenital syphilis for you and your clients, scan the QR code



## References

1. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2023). Infectious syphilis and congenital syphilis in Canada, 2022. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/reports-publications/canada-communicable-disease-report-ccdr/monthly-issue/2023-49/issue-10-october-2023/infectious-congenital-syphilis-canada-2022.html>
2. BC Centre for Disease Control. (2024). British Columbia Syphilis Indicators 2024 Q3. [http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Statistics%20and%20Research/Statistics%20and%20Reports/STI/BCCDC\\_website\\_syphilis\\_indicators\\_2024Q3.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Statistics%20and%20Research/Statistics%20and%20Reports/STI/BCCDC_website_syphilis_indicators_2024Q3.pdf)
3. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2023, September 25). Syphilis guide. Risk Factors and clinical manifestations. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/sexual-health-sexually-transmitted-infections/canadian-guidelines/syphilis/risk-factors-clinical-manifestation.html#a1:-:text=References:-Risk%20factors,-STBBI%20screening%20is>
4. National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Disease. (2024 March 8). Congenital Syphilis. Congenital Syphilis Disease Debrief. <https://nccid.ca/debrief/congenital-syphilis/>
5. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2023). Infection during pregnancy. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/syphilis/infection-during-pregnancy.html>