Syphilis

Syphilis infections are divided into several stages: primary, secondary, early latent, and late latent. The initial symptoms of syphilis may not always be recognized and without treatment, individuals generally enter a prolonged asymptomatic phase. Individuals can still however, be infectious despite not having any symptoms. Syphilis infection can lead to serious complications, including cardiovascular and neurologic disease, and may be fatal.

Following a decline in rates in BC in the early 1990's, infectious syphilis (i.e., primary, secondary, and early latent stages) began to re-emerge in BC starting in 1997. While provincial trends had been decreasing in 2009-2010, infectious syphilis rates began to increase in 2011 and continue to remain high in 2018.

The majority of infectious syphilis cases in BC are male. Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) continue to comprise the greatest number of infectious syphilis cases in BC.
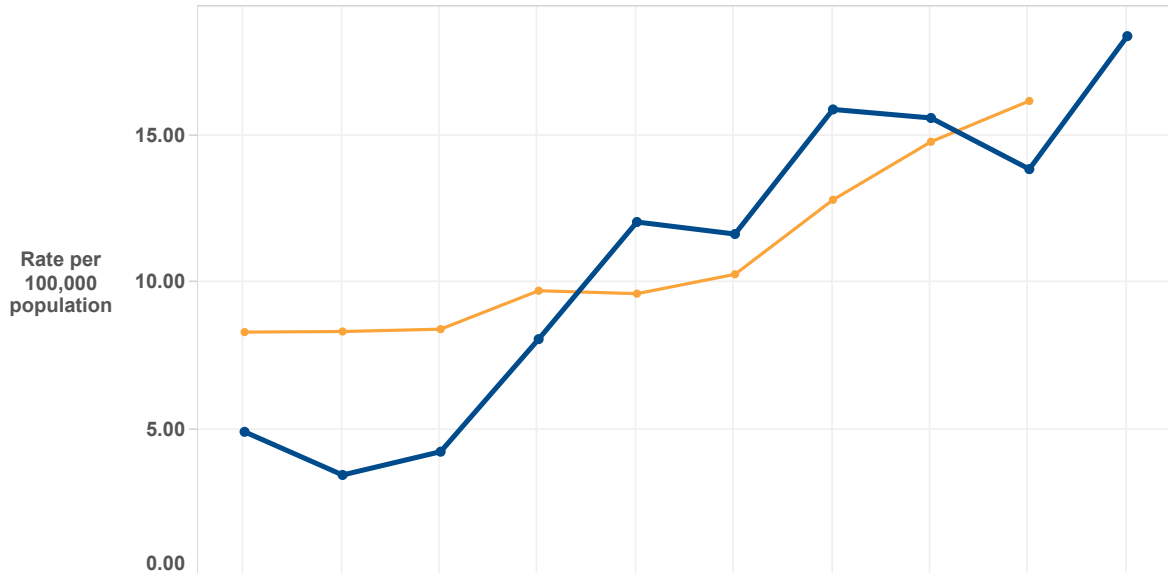
The BCCDC has developed a multi-prong strategy (the Syphilis Action Plan http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Statistics%20and%20Research/Statistics%20and%20Reports/STI/Syphilis%20Action%20Plan.pdf) with various partners including the regional health authorities, the

First Nations Health Authority, the BCCDC Public Health Laboratory, Perinatal Services BC, and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer to address the increase in infectious syphilis rates. Goals of this multi-prong strategy include increasing the awareness of syphilis among key populations and health care providers, enhancing surveillance of syphilis, maintaining high treatment completion rates, and optimizing the care of partners in order to prevent re-infection and onward transmission.

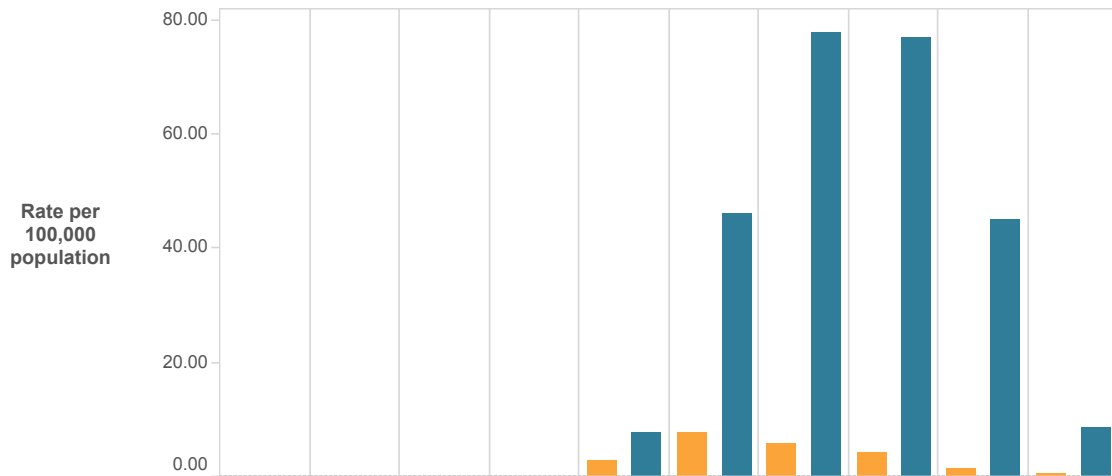For more information on the epidemiology of infectious syphilis, please see the STI Annual Report.

interactive dashboard

16.1 Syphilis Rates by Year, 2009-2018

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Reports	217	154	191	369	559	549	760	759	683	919
BC Rate	4.92	3.45	4.24	8.08	12.07	11.66	15.91	15.62	13.88	18.41
Canada Rate	8.32	8.34	8.42	9.73	9.63	10.29	12.83	14.81	16.20	

16.2 Syphilis Rates by Age Group and Sex, 2018

		<1	1-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-59	60+
Reports	Female	0	0	0	0	4	12	10	15	10	3
	Male	0	0	0	0	11	79	139	268	301	51
	Total	0	0	0	0	15	93	151	287	318	55
BC Rate	Female	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.96	7.73	5.89	4.35	1.42	0.45
	Male	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.67	46.17	77.98	77.06	44.90	8.56
	Total	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.39	28.50	43.39	41.42	23.13	4.36