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Syphilis identified in area

Stanton~ The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) has received notice from the Kent County Health Department of an outbreak of syphilis among homosexual men who are also infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). There are presently four confirmed cases of syphilis in Kent County and two cases south of Kent County.

The cases were all involved in sexual behavior that could potentially increase their partner's risk of becoming infected with HIV. Over 30 at-risk partners have been identified.

Some of the partners of the men infected with syphilis and HIV had contacted each other through internet dating sites. These dating sites are often anonymous, making tracing of a potential contact nearly impossible.

Homosexual men who have had sexual encounters of an anonymous nature are urged to contact their family doctor or their local health department for additional information and testing.

Symptoms of syphilis typically include an initial rash or painless sore that heals after several days. A secondary, more generalized rash then develops and gradually disappears.

Syphilis can lead to many serious and sometimes life-threatening illnesses. However, if syphilis is treated early it can be eradicated.

Montcalm County residents looking for information on HIV or syphilis or to make an appointment to be tested should contact their family doctor or call the health department at 989-831-3615. Testing is free, confidential, and anonymous.

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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