



## MEDIA RELEASE

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# New interactive syphilis decision making tool set to boost syphilis care, with specific advice for treating pregnant women and people

- Amid a worrying spike in syphilis cases, the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) has launched an online Syphilis Interactive Tool to guide clinicians through testing and treating syphilis.
- The decision making tool is free and available online, with primary practices encouraged to use this tool in their clinical care.
- The tool incorporates pathways for diagnosis and treatment in pregnant women and people, a priority population group of growing concern.

With a spike in syphilis cases across Australia, a new decision making tool has been launched to guide primary care professionals through testing and treating syphilis. The free decision making tool provides treatment pathways for pregnant women and people, a priority population that has seen [a fourfold increase in syphilis rates from 5.9 to 23.2 per 100,000 between 2009 and 2019.](#)

Developed by the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM), the Syphilis Interactive Tool will help primary care professionals interpret test results and decide on the best treatment approach, making care more effective, accurate and easy.

ASHM Board President, Sexual Health Physician and Researcher Dr Nicholas Medland said, “We’ve seen a concerning increase in syphilis cases over the past decade, with particular spikes among several priority populations. Yet today, many clinicians think syphilis is rare. Many clinicians also find the tests used to treat syphilis confusing. This tool takes primary care doctors through the complexities of test results, and supports decision making to identify which patients need urgent treatment.

“While syphilis infection can cause serious illness, it is curable. This worrying rise in syphilis cases is a major public health challenge, with early detection and effective treatment presenting the best solutions to syphilis control.

“That’s why we’ve launched this online Syphilis Interactive Tool. In less than ten minutes, primary care professionals can be guided through the testing and treatment of syphilis for their patients,” said Medland.

With [congenital syphilis diagnoses on the rise](#), the tool has been updated to be more

**[ashm.org.au](http://ashm.org.au)**

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interactive, with some prompts on treating pregnant women and people.

“The increase in syphilis in women is particularly worrying because of the risk of transmission to the unborn baby during pregnancy, known as congenital syphilis. There has been a large increase in congenital syphilis diagnoses between 2019 and 2020.

“It’s important that GPs are aware of this increase in cases. If a pregnant woman is not diagnosed and treated, congenital syphilis can have potentially devastating consequences,” said Medland.

Congenital syphilis occurs when the infection is transmitted from a mother to her unborn baby during pregnancy. If the mother’s infection is untreated, transmission likelihood is high. Congenital syphilis can cause miscarriage, stillbirth or serious health problems and disability in babies.

ASHM’s Syphilis Interactive Tool is a valuable addition to existing resources, including the on-demand training module, [Syphilis Outbreak Training](#).

ASHM is encouraging primary care professionals to help combat Australia’s increase in syphilis cases by integrating this tool into their clinical practice. Use [the Syphilis Interactive Tool](#) today.

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