

For Immediate Release

Syphilis is spreading in Nunavut

IQALUIT, Nunavut (February 13, 2013) – Syphilis is rising in Nunavut, and over 30 cases have been recorded since an outbreak of the sexually transmitted infection (STI) last year.

The Department of Health and Social Services is concerned as syphilis continues to rise and is spreading from Iqaluit to other regions.

"Safer sex is the best prevention," says Dr. Maureen Baikie, Chief Medical Officer of Health. "I urge anyone who thinks they may be infected with syphilis to visit their health care provider as soon as possible. Syphilis is easily treated, but it's important to seek treatment early."

Decreasing the number of sexual partners and using a condom during sex can greatly reduce the risk of transmission of syphilis. Avoiding risky behaviour like excessive drinking and drug use that can lead to unprotected sex will also prevent the spread of STIs.

Syphilis is a STI that is passed from person to person through direct contact with a syphilis sore. Pregnant women can pass it to their unborn babies if they are not treated early.

Syphilis is easily cured if treated early with antibiotics. Over time, if left untreated, it can cause severe damage to the heart, blood vessels and brain, and even death. People with syphilis are at greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDs.

Syphilis symptoms include a rash or sore, but many people show no symptoms. People who have multiple sexual partners are at increased risk of contracting syphilis.

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