

Clinical Resource for Six of the Most Common Scenarios

Syphilis Testing and Treatment



1 You only ordered VDRL or RPR and the result was reactive

Step 1: Call your Lab to run confirmatory testing.

Step 2: Call your Local Health Department DIS for information on patient history. For assistance finding your DIS, call the Eastern Region DIS Helpline at 804-332-0625 or 804-929-4215.

Step 3: Refrain from making a presumptive diagnosis as long as not symptomatic and not pregnant.

2 You have performed a Rapid Syphilis Treponemal test on a 25-year-old sexually active female and the test is positive

Step 1: Treat with Bicillin 2.4 million units IM.

Step 2: Collect blood to monitor response to treatment.

Step 3: Inform your patient that the result must be reported to the Virginia Department of Health and she will be referred for interview and contact tracing.

3 Your patient wants to be tested because a partner they met online has informed him that he just got treated for Syphilis

Step 1: Explain that the incubation period for Syphilis is 10-90 days so testing may not be diagnostic.

Step 2: Inform that presumptive treatment is available within this window and that free testing and treatment is available at the Local Health Department.

4 You ordered the Syphilis Cascade and the RPR is unchanged at 1:8 after previous treatment with three injections of Bi-cillin; the patient is asymptomatic and without concern for re-infection

Step 1: Check for HIV status because so-called "sero-fast" results are most commonly seen in people living with HIV.

Step 2: For additional information on your patient, call your Local Health Department DIS. For assistance finding your DIS, call the Eastern Region DIS Helpline at 804-332-0625 or 804-929-4215.

Step 3: Consider additional RPR testing in 30-60 days to ensure no re-infection.

5 Your patient presents with new onset headache and visual changes. You considered Syphilis in your differential diagnosis and ordered testing. The treponemal Antibody test is positive and the Non-treponemal test (RPR) is positive

Step 1: Refer immediately for specialty care. Otic and Ophthalmic Syphilis are considered Neurosyphilis, Treatment with parenteral Penicillin is required.

Step 2: Defer decisions regarding CSF Testing to specialty care team.

6 You ordered the Reverse Cascade and the Treponemal antibody (EIA) is Negative, but the RPR is 1:1

Step 1: To assist in making a diagnosis, obtain additional information from your Local Health Department DIS. For assistance finding your DIS, call the Eastern Region DIS Helpline at 804-332-0625 or 804-929-4215.

Step 2: Refrain from discussing test results with the patient until after the conversation with DIS.