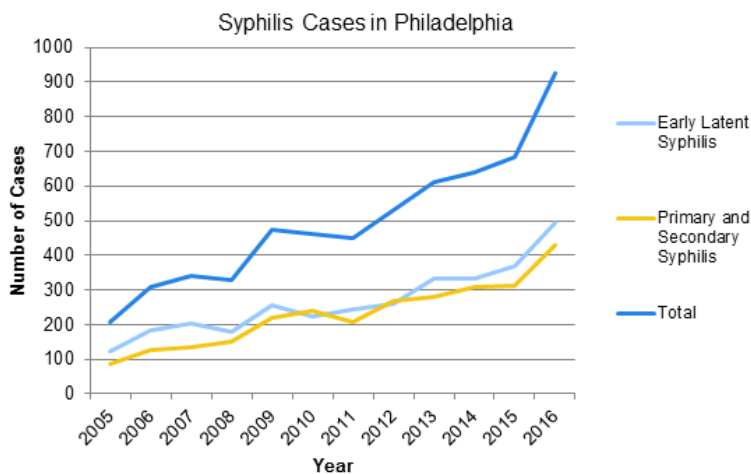


Resurgence of Syphilis Among Men Who Have Sex With Men

Syphilis is a sexually-transmitted infection that, if untreated, can have severe health consequences. In addition, the sores caused by syphilis can promote the spread of HIV infection among sex partners. This issue of CHART focuses on the resurgence of syphilis in Philadelphia.

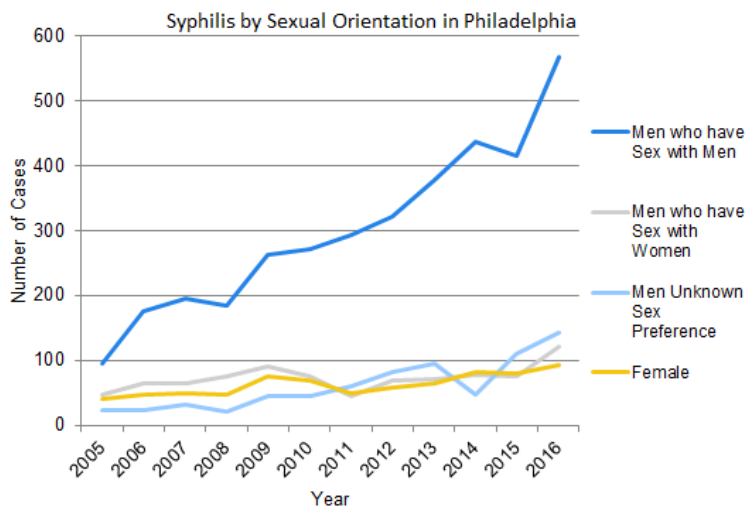
Syphilis Case Counts Have Been Rising in Philadelphia Since 2005



- Infectious syphilis includes cases diagnosed with primary, secondary, or early latent (evidence of acquisition within last 1 year) stage of disease.
- Syphilis diagnoses have been steadily increasing since 2005, with a sharp rise noted in 2016.
- Between 2005 and 2016, infectious syphilis diagnoses more than quadrupled, from 208 to 925.

(Source: Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control)

Syphilis Disproportionately Affects Men Who Have Sex With Men



- In 2016, 61% of all reported infectious syphilis cases were among men who have sex with men (MSM).
- Cases of infectious syphilis are also increasing, but more slowly, in women and men who have sex with women.

(Source: Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control)

Most Persons with Syphilis Have HIV Infection

Demographics of Syphilis Among Men in Philadelphia

		Number	Percent	Rate**
Age Group	13-19	27	5%	3.5
	20-24	108	19%	15.1
	25-29	161	28%	24.9
	30-34	98	17%	18.4
	35-39	45	8%	9.9
	>40	128	23%	4.5
Race	Black	360	63%	15.7
	White	157	28%	6.4
	Hispanic	30	5%	4.3
	Other/Unknown	20	4%	n/a
*HIV Status at time of Syphilis Diagnosis	Positive	336	59%	243.2
	Negative	215	38%	3.7
	Unknown	16	3%	n/a
Total		567	100%	9.5

*All patients tested for HIV, unless previously known to be positive.

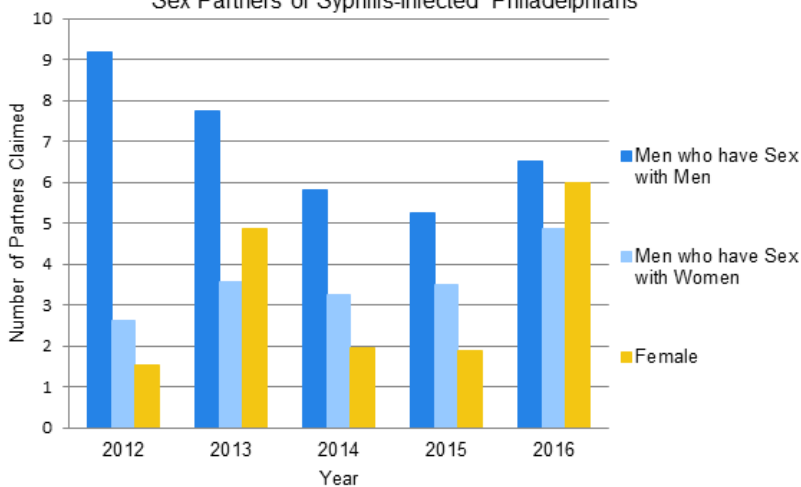
** Per 10,000 men (census data, excluding age <13 years)

- The majority (59%) of infectious syphilis cases among men were co-infected with HIV.
- 52% (296/567) of infectious syphilis cases among men were under 30 years of age.
- Syphilis rates were approximately twice as high in African-Americans as whites.

(Source: Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control)

MSM with Syphilis Claim 5 to 9 Sex Partners

Sex Partners of Syphilis-Infected Philadelphians

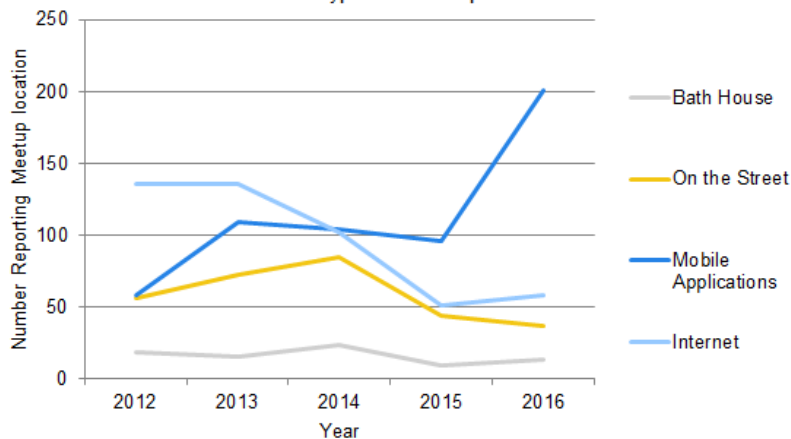


- Among MSM with infectious syphilis, the mean number of sexual partners claimed during the 12 months prior to diagnosis has varied from 5 to 9, but has not changed significantly since 2014.
- The mean number of sexual partners claimed by women and men who have sex with women has been increasing in recent years, and was not significantly different from MSM in 2016.

(Source: Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control)

MSM with Syphilis Frequently Met Their Sex Partners Through Mobile Apps

MSM with Syphilis Meet-up Locations



- Mobile apps use geo-positioning to locate potential sex partners. These apps present a challenge for identifying and treating sexual partners of syphilis cases because the interaction is often anonymous and cannot be re-traced.

(Source: Philadelphia Department of Public Health, Division of Disease Control)

What Can Be Done

The Health Department is:

- using various strategies to reach people at risk of syphilis, including through social media, mobile technology, and dating apps.
- advising the public about the importance of syphilis testing and prevention.

Health care providers can:

- regularly and routinely test high risk individuals, especially sexually active MSM, for syphilis.
- increase suspicion of syphilis in patients who present with rashes or sores, especially among men who have sex with men.
- treat presumptively for syphilis when genital ulcers or plantar/palmar rashes are present, suggesting early infection.

People can:

- know the signs and symptoms of syphilis, which include painless genital ulcers or a rash that begins on your trunk but eventually covers your entire body — even the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet. Seek medical care if you suspect you have been exposed or infected with syphilis.
- seek regular testing for syphilis if you are at high risk, especially if you change sex partners.
- use condoms every time to prevent infection with syphilis. Limit your number of sexual partners and know who they are.

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