



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

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Increase in Syphilis cases in the Region

The Northwestern Health Unit warns that a sudden rise in the number of syphilis cases has been seen in the Kenora area.

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection (STI) spread through unprotected vaginal, anal, or oral sex, or direct contact with a syphilis sore. Gillian Lunny, Manager of Sexual Health and Harm Reduction explains that “Syphilis is easily cured with antibiotics when treated early. But, delayed treatment can result in severe and irreversible damage.”

To prevent syphilis, the health unit urges the public to use condoms and other barrier methods like dental dams, which are available for free at local Northwestern Health Unit offices. Those who have had unprotected sex should get tested from their health care provider or the Northwestern Health Unit; a person could be infected and not feel unwell.

Those who are most at risk are:

- people with multiple sexual partners
- people who have unprotected sex
- people who have had an STI in the past

Pregnant women with syphilis can pass it on to their baby, which can cause serious health problems to the infant. Pregnant women should get tested for syphilis at least once during a pregnancy to be sure their baby is protected from the infection.

To prevent infection, Lunny encourages the public to visit their health care provider or their local health unit office, “Health care providers and NWHU offices have free condoms, free testing, and can provide education to anyone needing more information on syphilis or any other sexual health related issue”.

For more information on syphilis, call your local health unit office or visit this website: <https://www.nwhu.on.ca/ourservices/SexualHealth/Pages/Syphilis.aspx>

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