



## LAC DPH Health Advisory: Rise in Disseminated Gonococcal Infections

January 13, 2020



*This message is intended for primary care, emergency medicine, urgent care, infectious disease, rheumatology, and dermatology health care providers  
Please distribute as appropriate.*

### Key Messages

- The CDC is reporting a concerning rise nationally in cases of disseminated gonococcal infections (DGI).
- Health care providers are asked to consider DGI in patients with septic arthritis, polyarthralgia, tenosynovitis, petechial/pustular skin lesions, and/or symptoms of bacteremia and to perform the appropriate tests prior to treatment.
- Suspect cases should be reported within 1 working day to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LAC DPH) without waiting for laboratory confirmation.

### Situation

DGI is an uncommon but severe complication of untreated gonorrhea. The CDC is concerned about [a national rise in cases of DGI](#) and is currently working with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services on a cluster of cases, where the majority have reported amphetamine and some opioid injection drug use. LAC DPH is requesting that clinicians be alert for local cases of DGI.

### Actions Requested of Providers

- Consider the diagnosis of DGI in patients with septic arthritis or with polyarthralgia, tenosynovitis, petechial/pustular skin lesions, along with symptoms of bacteremia.
- Take a sexual history in patients with symptoms/signs suggestive of DGI.
- Collect specimens for NAATs and culture from both mucosal sites (e.g. urogenital, rectal, or pharyngeal) and culture from disseminated sites (e.g., skin, synovial fluid, blood, or CSF) prior to treatment of suspect cases.
- Test all patients with suspected DGI for HIV, syphilis, and chlamydia as appropriate.
- Report suspect cases within 1 working day without waiting for laboratory confirmation.
- Treat patient per [CDC guidelines](#) and treat or refer sex partner(s) for evaluation and treatment.

## **Clinical Presentation**

Clinical manifestations of DGI include oligoarticular septic arthritis of the knees, wrists or ankles, or asymmetric polyarthralgia, tenosynovitis and petechial or pustular skin lesions along with symptoms of bacteremia, or, on rare occasions, endocarditis or meningitis. Mucosal sites of infection are often asymptomatic.

## **Specimen Collection and Laboratory Testing**

If there is clinical suspicion of DGI, it is important to attempt to identify and isolate the organism.

- Obtain specimens for NAAT from urogenital sites and extragenital sites (i.e., rectal and/or pharyngeal) and
- Obtain specimens for culture and sensitivity from urogenital and extragenital sites and disseminated sites (e.g., skin, synovial fluid, blood, CSF).

Providers should check with their laboratory regarding GC culture specimen collection and transport requirements. Additional information is available from the Association for Public Health Laboratories.

All positive GC cultures from DGI cases should be confirmed by LAC Public Health Laboratory. Please indicate this on your laboratory requisition.

## **Treatment of Patients and their Sex Partners**

Management of DGI cases should be guided by the [CDC STD Treatment Guidelines](#). Hospitalization and consultation with an infectious disease specialist are recommended for initial therapy. Clinical consultation for DGI is also available through LAC DPH's Division of HIV and STD Program (DHSP) Clinical Consultation Warm Line: 213-368-7441 during business hours.

Sex partner(s) from the past 60 days should be evaluated and treated for gonorrhea (ideally tested with culture and NAAT prior to presumptive treatment). Local [DPH STD Clinic](#) services are available.

## **Reporting**

### **Los Angeles County Department of Public Health:**

- Promptly report suspect cases to the Division of HIV and STD Programs within 1 working day:
  - Call 213-368-7441 to report a case during regular business hours (8-5pm, Monday-Friday), and/or
  - Fax a [CMR](#) to LAC DPH DHSP at 213-749-9602.

### **Long Beach Health and Human Services:**

- Fax a CMR to 562-570-4374 or call 562-570-4321.

### **Pasadena Public Health Department:**

- Fax a CMR to 626-744-6115 or call 626-744-6089.

## Resources

- LA County [STD Confidential Morbidity Report Form](#)
- [DPH STD Clinic Schedule and Map](#)
- [2015 CDC STD Treatment Guidelines, "Gonococcal Infections"](#) - also available on the CDC STD Treatment (Tx) Guidelines [Apple](#) and [Android](#) apps.
- [DPH Poster](#) - Take a Sexual History of All Patients – Getting the conversation started



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