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Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report

Across The Nation | Vermont Department of Health Announces Increase in Syphilis Cases, Could Contribute to Spread of HIV
 [Jan 04, 2008]

The [Vermont Department of Health](#) on Wednesday announced an increase in the number of recorded syphilis cases in the state, the [Barre Montpelier Times Argus](#) reports (Hirschfeld, Barre Montpelier *Times Argus*, 1/3). According to the [AP/Burlington Free Press](#), nine cases of syphilis -- which can increase the risk of HIV -- were reported last year in the state, compared with three in 2006 and one in 2005 (Rathke, AP/Burlington *Free Press*, 1/3). The increase of syphilis cases in the state follows a nationwide increase in recent years.

According to Vermont epidemiologist Cort Lohff, nearly all the cases involve men who have sex with men. Lohff added that some of the cases were contracted in the state, whereas in the past, most of the cases diagnosed in the state had been contracted outside Vermont (Barre Montpelier *Times Argus*, 1/3). "The key here is that this infection has found its way into Vermont, and it's being spread among sexually active [MSM] here in Vermont," Lohff said.

Hannah Hauser -- co-director of health and wellness for the [R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center](#) in Burlington, Vt. -- said the increase indicates that more people are being tested for the disease and seeking treatment (AP/Burlington *Free Press*, 1/3). Nancy Mosher, president and CEO of [Planned Parenthood of Northern New England](#), said the increase in syphilis cases in the state represents "good reason to give some renewed public messaging and education about" syphilis, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (Barre Montpelier *Times Argus*, 1/3).

According to [CDC](#) officials, the number of syphilis cases in the U.S. reached an all-time low in 2000 but increased annually from 2000

to 2005, the most recent year for which the agency has figures. CDC analysts estimate that in 2000, MSM accounted for 7% of syphilis cases in the country but accounted for more than 60% in 2005. According to CDC, syphilis incidence in the overall population was 2.1 cases per 100,000 people in 2000, compared with three cases per 100,000 people in 2005, or 8,724 cases ([Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report](#), 8/14/07).

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