



**DATE:** November 22, 2021  
**TO:** Healthcare Providers  
**FROM:** Dr. Maggie Park, Public Health Officer

Please distribute to all providers and relevant medical staff in your office.

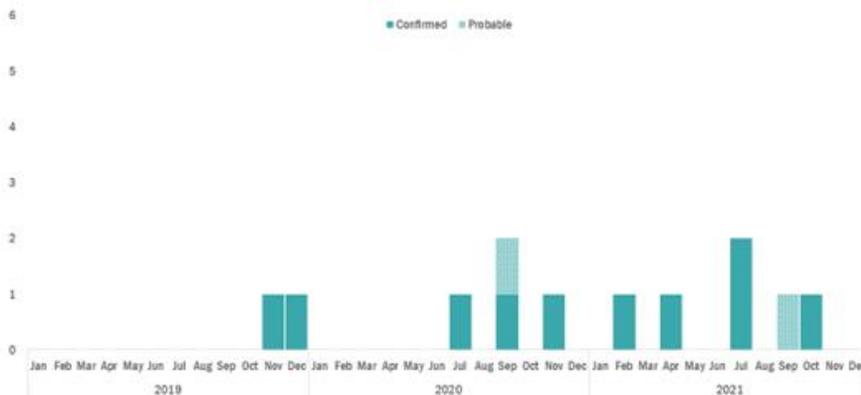
## HEALTH ADVISORY

### Disseminated Gonococcal Infection (DGI)

In recent months, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has received increasing reports of disseminated gonococcal infections (DGI), an uncommon but severe complication of untreated gonorrhea.

**In 2021 there have been five confirmed cases of DGI diagnosed and reported in San Joaquin County.** Fewer clinic-based visits during the COVID-19 pandemic may be reducing screening and treatment of acute STI infections. **Acute care providers are strongly encouraged to screen for and treat STIs to avoid complications such as DGI.**

### DGI Cases, 2019-2021 YTD, San Joaquin County



DGI occurs when the sexually transmitted pathogen *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* invades the bloodstream and spreads to distant sites in the body, leading to clinical findings such as septic arthritis, polyarthralgia, tenosynovitis, petechial/pustular skin lesions, bacteremia—or rarely, endocarditis or meningitis.

DGI is uncommon and thought to occur in 0.5-3% of untreated gonorrhea cases. Cultures from disseminated sites of infection are often negative and mucosal sites of infection (e.g., urogenital, rectal, or pharyngeal) are often asymptomatic and not tested before antimicrobial treatment is started, despite having a higher diagnostic yield. **As a result, DGI is usually a clinical diagnosis without microbiologic confirmation, likely contributing to underdiagnosis and treatment delays.**



## ACTIONS REQUESTED OF CLINICIANS

- **Continue to screen, test, and treat for STDs per the CDC STD Treatment Guidelines for Gonococcal Infections:** [www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Gonorrhea.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Gonorrhea.aspx)  
*\*Guidelines also available as mobile app*
  - When facility and in-person clinical services are limited, follow guidance from the Colleague Letter: STD Care and Prevention Guidance During Disruption of Clinical Services Due to COVID-19 Pandemic (April 2020):  
[www.cdc.gov/std/dstdp/DCL-STDTreatment-COVID19-04062020.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/std/dstdp/DCL-STDTreatment-COVID19-04062020.pdf)
- **If there is clinical suspicion for DGI, collect and process:**
  - NAAT and culture specimens from urogenital and extragenital e.g., pharyngeal and rectal mucosal site(s), as applicable
  - Culture specimens—for antimicrobial susceptibility—from disseminated sites of infection e.g., skin, synovial fluid, blood, or cerebrospinal fluid.
  - All gonorrhea isolates in DGI cases should be tested for antimicrobial susceptibility, which requires culture.
- **Obtain a behavioral risk assessment, including a nonjudgmental sexual history.** This allows you to provide STD/HIV prevention counseling and to treat patients and their sex partners, to stop disease transmission.
  - Use the CDC Guidance for Obtaining Sexual History:  
[www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/resources.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/resources.htm)
  - Ask patients to refer sex partners from the past 60 days for evaluation, testing, and possible treatment for gonorrhea.
  - Let patients know a representative from San Joaquin County Public Health Services (PHS) will contact them for an interview.
- **Hospitalization and consultation with an infectious disease specialist are recommended for initial therapy.** Clinical consultation for DGI management is available to providers through the STD Clinical Consultation Network: [www.stdccn.org/render/Public](http://www.stdccn.org/render/Public)
  - The CDC is working with PHS to receive all clinical isolates from DGI cases for additional testing.
- **Report all laboratory-confirmed and clinically suspected cases of DGI to PHS within one working day** of identification.
  - Use the Confidential Morbidity Report (CMR) found at  
[www.sjcphs.org/disease/documents/cdph110a.pdf?2](http://www.sjcphs.org/disease/documents/cdph110a.pdf?2) or
  - Fax completed CMR to (209) 468-3495.

### Additional Resources

Dear Colleague Letter: STD Care and Prevention Guidance During Disruption of Clinical Services Due to COVID-19 Pandemic (April 2020): [www.cdc.gov/std/dstdp/DCL-STDTreatment-COVID19-04062020.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/std/dstdp/DCL-STDTreatment-COVID19-04062020.pdf)



CDC Dear Colleague Letter - Increasing Reports of DGI:

[www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DGI\\_Dear\\_Colleague\\_Letter.pdf](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DGI_Dear_Colleague_Letter.pdf)

Instructions for Shipping Disseminated Gonorrhea Infection Isolates to CDC:

[www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DGI\\_Isolate\\_Shipping\\_Instructions.pdf](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/DGI_Isolate_Shipping_Instructions.pdf)

Recommendations for Laboratory-Based Detection of *C. trachomatis* and *N. gonorrhoeae* (2014): [www.cdc.gov/std/laboratory/2014labrec/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/laboratory/2014labrec/default.htm)

CDC Guidance for Obtaining Sexual History: [www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/resources.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment/resources.htm)

National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers, STD Clinical Consultation Network: [www.stdccn.org/external\\_icon](http://www.stdccn.org/external_icon)

California Department of Public Health (CDPH) STD Control Branch: [www.std.ca.gov/](http://www.std.ca.gov/)  
– Gonorrhea Page: [www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Gonorrhea.aspx](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Gonorrhea.aspx)

**For more information, call PHS Community Services at (209) 468-3845.**