



DIRECTORATE  
OF HEALTH

Chief Epidemiologist for Iceland

# EPI-ICE

Volume 2. Issue 5. May 2006.

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## VACCINE TENDER IN ICELAND

### National Childhood Vaccination Programme

A tender for vaccines used in the National Childhood Vaccination Programme was last issued in 1999 and since the year 2000 the present organisation of the vaccination programme has remained largely unchanged. According to the 1999 tender documents, a tender for vaccination programme vaccines is supposed to be issued every few years. Now, therefore, it is time to issue a new tender.

The new tender was published at the end of April, 2006, and is in the hands of the State Trading Centre in cooperation with the Chief Epidemiologist and the Ministry of Health and Social Security. The following changes to the National Childhood Vaccination Programme in Iceland are planned:

- The vaccine used at five years of age will contain lower concentration of the diphtheria antigen (dTaP) than the currently used vaccine. Therefore side-effects are expected to be less frequent, but the efficacy will remain unchanged.
- A booster vaccination against pertussis will be introduced at 14 years of age (dTaP) in order to minimize the spread of pertussis in the society.
- Emphasis will be on the use of combination vaccines in order to reduce the number of injections as much as possible.
- Vaccination against hepatitis B will possibly be introduced at the ages of three, five and twelve months.



The Chief Epidemiologist recommends that all individuals over 60 years, children and adults with underlying illnesses, and health-care staff be inoculated annually against influenza.

### Vaccine against influenza

In the near future, it is also planned to issue a tender for influenza vaccines in Iceland for use in the annual vaccination of individuals 60 years and older and individuals with underlying chronic illnesses. It is estimated that the health authorities will be buying 60,000 doses a year, which will be used according to guidelines from the Chief Epidemiologist. The producers of influenza vaccines will also be given an opportunity to submit a tender for vaccines in case an influenza pandemic were to take place.

## MUMPS

In the latest issue of EPI-ICE, the mumps outbreak that has been ongoing for the past several months was reported to be subsiding. In April, only three individuals were

diagnosed with mumps, a clear indication that the vaccination campaign against mumps has been successful.

## SYPHILIS IN ICELAND 2000–2005

*Syphilis infection appears to be more common in males than females.*

Syphilis is rarely detected in Iceland; however, 2–9 cases have been diagnosed annually in the past five years. Most cases occurred among immigrants, who acquired the infection abroad but were diagnosed after arriving in Iceland. Those infected are predominantly in the age group 20–39 years, and the infection appears to be more common in males than females. In 2001, a few cases were detected among Icelandic men who have sex with men (MSM) but the disease was contained.

### Symptoms of syphilis

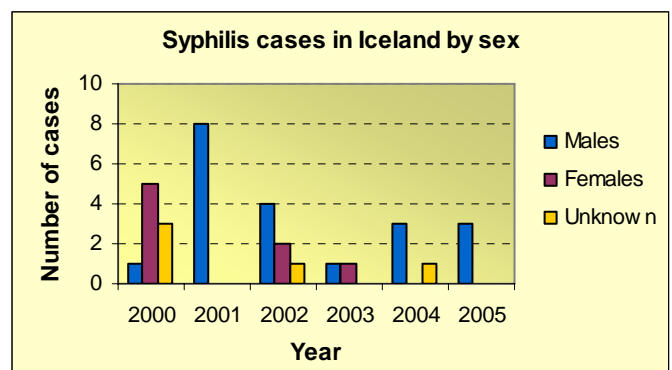
There are three stages of syphilis. The first stage usually begins 10–90 days after infection, with a localized sore (chancere) at the infection site, most commonly on the external genitalia, by or in the rectum, or in the mouth.

In the second stage, 4–8 weeks after the initial symptoms, symptoms such as fatigue, low-grade fever, arthralgia, enlarged lymph nodes, rash and hair loss, and even meningitis can occur.

The third stage may occur years after

transmission, presenting with symptoms from the cardio-vascular system or the central nervous system. Gummas may occur on the skin, in the soft tissue, or the bones.

Latent syphilis is asymptomatic.



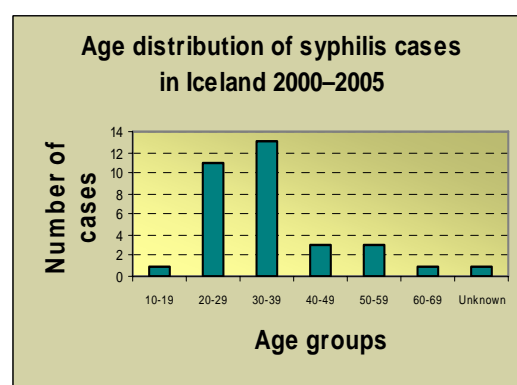
### Transmission

Syphilis is usually transmitted via the mucous membrane during vaginal intercourse, oral or anal sex. Transmission via the skin, e.g. on a finger, has also been reported.

Pregnant women can pass the infection on to the fetus.

### Epidemiology and prevention

In the past few years an increased number of syphilis cases has been detected in large cities, especially among MSM. According to a Dutch study, conducted on cases from the year 2004, 86% of syphilis cases in males could be traced to MSM. The use of latex condoms is an effective way of preventing sexually transmitted diseases and the Chief Epidemiologist urges people to exhibit caution during casual sex.



*There is no indication that the spread of gonorrhoea is subsiding*

## NEW CASES OF GONORRHOEA

The latest issue of EPI-ICE covered the increase observed in the number of gonorrhoea cases in Iceland. New cases are still occurring; three cases were diagnosed in April and one case has been detected in the first ten days of May. Those affected range in age between 23 and 35 years, three males and

one female. Therefore, there is no indication that the spread of gonorrhoea is subsiding. The Chief Epidemiologist urges caution, through the use of latex condoms during casual sex. It is also important to seek medical attention for diagnosis and treatment if there is any suspicion of an infection.