Non-fatal Overdose Update

Jackson County Public Health has kept the Yellow Alert in place for accidental non-fatal overdoses from heroin during week 29 (July 14 – July 20). This alert is being issued based on an increase in emergency department visits for non-fatal overdoses from heroin during weeks 25, 26, 27 and 28 (June 16 – July 13). Emergency department visits are monitored using a syndromic surveillance system called ESSENCE.

A yellow alert is a warning that Jackson County Public Health has identified a higher than usual or a cluster of suspected accidental illicit opioid overdoses, such as heroin, over a specific period of time.

We are encouraging the medical community, other community partners, family and friends to be aware of the situation and advise people who suffer from an opioid addiction of the following information:

- Abstaining from drug use is the best way to eliminate the risk of an overdose. Ask the person about their willingness to begin medication-assisted treatment or drug treatment. For a list of providers, you can access the Stay Safe Oregon website.
- Even people who haven’t used in a while may relapse and are at increased risk of an overdose. It is important to be aware of your tolerance.
- Have an overdose plan, make sure someone can get to you when you use, and it is safest only to use when you are with someone you trust.
- BE PREPARED. GET NALOXONE. SAVE A LIFE. You can get naloxone through these avenues:
  - Any pharmacist in Oregon can prescribe naloxone to you.
  - Medical providers can prescribe naloxone and send the prescription to your pharmacy.
  - People who utilize the Syringe Exchange Program can receive free naloxone.
  - Free naloxone is available through Max’s Mission community meetings and events.
- It is important to call 911 when someone is overdosing from opioids. If you use naloxone, the effects are temporary, and the person still needs medical attention. After the medication wears off, the person could fall back into a coma. If you call police or 911 to get help for someone having a drug overdose, Oregon’s Good Samaritan Law protects you from being arrested or prosecuted for drug-related charges or parole/probation violations based on information provided to emergency responders.
- It is important not to mix drugs because drugs taken together can interact in ways that increase their overall effect and increase your risk of overdosing.
Increase in Shigella Cases in Multnomah County

Multnomah County is reporting an increase in cases of Shigella, 1 a bacterial diarrheal disease that can spread easily through intimate contact, including oral and anal sexual activity, as well as among people without access to regular hygiene, as it did in a Portland-area outbreak in 2015-16. Until recently, Multnomah County typically received about 20 Shigella case reports per year, but is reporting 95 locally acquired infections in 2018. 1 Most people recover without any treatment. However, for those who are severely ill with Shigella, treatment can be difficult because the majority of local Shigella strains are resistant to at least one common antibiotic, and many local strains are resistant to several first-choice antibiotics.

Jackson County Public Health is asking providers to:

- Perform appropriate tests to identify causative agents in cases of gastrointestinal illness
- Consider Shigella as a potential differential diagnosis in cases of severe gastrointestinal illness, even if the patient does not have a history of international travel, particularly if the patient is a man who has sex with men (MSM), reports oral-anal sexual activity, or has other indicators of high-risk sexual activity, such as a history of STI
- Perform culture and sensitivity prior to use of antibiotics in cases of severe gastrointestinal illness where antibiotic treatment is being considered
- Provide fecal-oral health education to patients who engage in oral and anal sexual activity
- Report Shigella cases to Jackson County Public Health within one working day

Reporting Shigella Cases to Jackson County Public Health

Shigella is a reportable communicable disease and should be reported to Jackson County Public Health within one working day. Below are three options for reporting to Jackson County Public Health:

1. **Electronic** – This is a web-based confidential reporting system through the Oregon Health Authority. These reports will be automatically routed to Jackson County Public Health. Click on the hyperlink to access this option, [Web-based Confidential Oregon Morbidity Report](http://jacksoncountyor.org/hhs/Public-Health).

2. **Call Jackson County Public Health Communicable Disease** – Clinicians can call and make a report 24 hours a day. During business hours call 541-774-8045, and after-hours call 541-618-4651.

3. **Fax** – Clinicians can fax a report to Jackson County Public Health using the [Oregon Confidential Morbidity Form](http://jacksoncountyor.org/hhs/Public-Health) (please click on the hyperlink to access this form). The form should be faxed 541-774-7954.

HIV and Other Infectious Diseases Among People Who Use Drugs

Recently, the Oregon Health Authority’s HIV/STD/TB Program detected an increase in the number of cases of HIV infection among people who use methamphetamine and inject drugs in Multnomah County.

Some notable features of the cases diagnosed with HIV include:
Almost 90% reported using methamphetamine alone or in combination with opioids; non-injection use of methamphetamine was very common.

Many cases had been diagnosed with syphilis or hepatitis C infection prior to their HIV diagnosis.

Many of the women diagnosed with HIV reported that they had had a sex partner who they knew to be living with HIV; only one reported ever taking pre-exposure prophylaxis, PrEP, a daily medication proven to prevent HIV infection.

Almost 70% of the men who inject drugs newly diagnosed with HIV also reported sex with men.

Over 60% reported unstable housing.

Forty percent of new diagnoses among people who inject drugs were made at one of several different hospitals in the county.

In Oregon as a whole, we have seen an increase in HIV infections and syphilis among people who inject drugs, particularly among those who use methamphetamine alone or in combination with other drugs, including opioids. We have also observed an increase in hepatitis C infections among people under 30 years of age, a group presumed to be recently infected through injection drug use. To learn more about the trends and contextual factors we see in data specific to Oregon, take a look at a recent talk the OHA HIV/STD/TB team prepared on the trends and costs of the infectious disease complications of injection drug use.

People who use drugs deserve our care and compassion. OHA and Jackson County Public Health ask that if you see people who use methamphetamine or inject drugs in your clinics, hospitals, or emergency rooms that you:

- Recognize the important impact that you can have on the lives of people who use drugs.
- Test for HIV, syphilis, and hepatitis C infection; your local public health authority can assist with informing patients of their results and linking patients to care. Jackson County Public Health offers free HIV testing.
- Prescribe HIV-negative patients pre-exposure prophylaxis, PrEP, a once-daily medication to prevent HIV infection. You can also refer patients to one of many PrEP providers in the state.
- Know that if someone tests positive for HIV, help is available. HIV case management is available throughout the state to link individuals to HIV care. OHA’s CAREAssist program can help eligible individuals with out of pocket medical expenses, including insurance premiums, medications, and medical services.
- Vaccinate for hepatitis A and B. Jackson County Public Health offers immunizations.
- Refer patients to the Jackson County Syringe Exchange.
- Prescribe naloxone to prevent overdose death and inform them about the Good Samaritan Law; many of those using methamphetamine also use opioids.
- Refer patients to local providers of substance use disorder treatment.

“The mission of Jackson County Health and Human Services is to plan, coordinate and provide public services that protect and promote the health and well-being of county residents.”
REFERENCES