

Early syphilis

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease of protean manifestation caused by the spirochete *Treponema pallidum*. Early syphilis cases represent an aggregate of primary, secondary and early latent cases of less than one year's duration.

The 106 reported early syphilis cases in Oregon are the highest since 1993. The current surge of early syphilis cases started in 2009, and infection rates have doubled since 2008. The majority (90%) of the early syphilis cases reported during 2010 were among men who have sex with other men. The infection may be transmitted among sex partners during the primary and secondary stages.

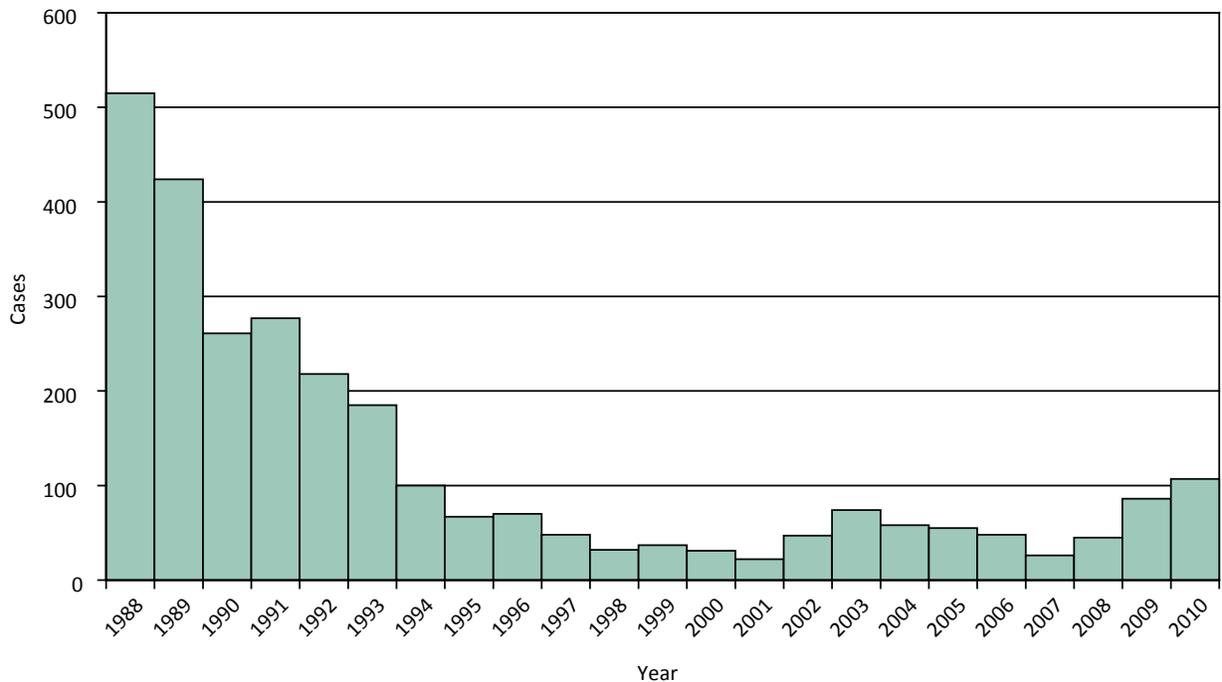
Syphilis is transmitted via vaginal, rectal or oral sexual contact. Syphilis can be prevented by abstaining from sex or only having sex with one uninfected sex partner. Those who are sexually active outside of a mutually monogamous relationship can lower their risks of infection by using a condom when engaging in sexual activity.

It is important to identify and treat persons with early syphilis to prevent late complications, such as brain and heart damage, and to prevent congenital infections. Moreover, persons with primary or secondary syphilis more easily acquire and transmit HIV. An effective way to limit the spread of syphilis is to evaluate and treat recent sex partners of persons with early syphilis.

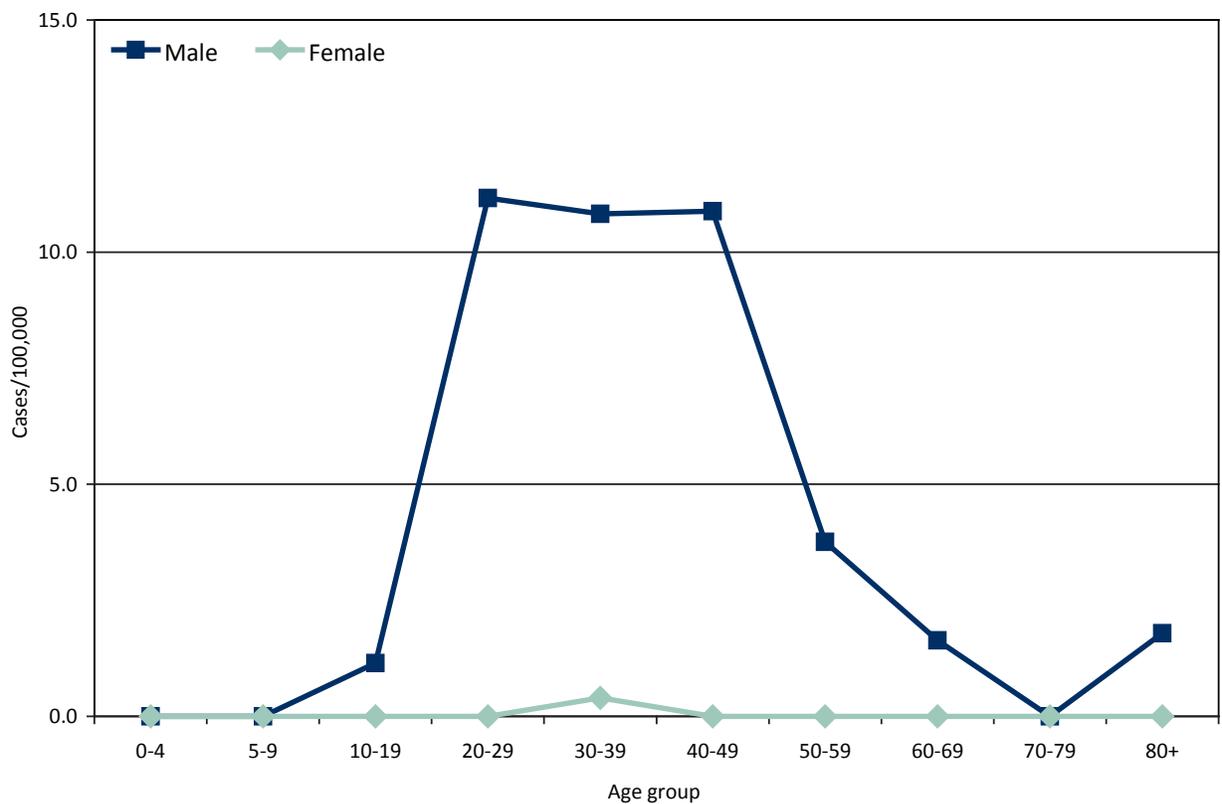
Reported Oregon early syphilis 2008–2010

| | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Primary and secondary cases | 27 | 57 | 74 |
| Early latent cases | 18 | 29 | 32 |
| Total early syphilis cases | 45 | 86 | 106 |

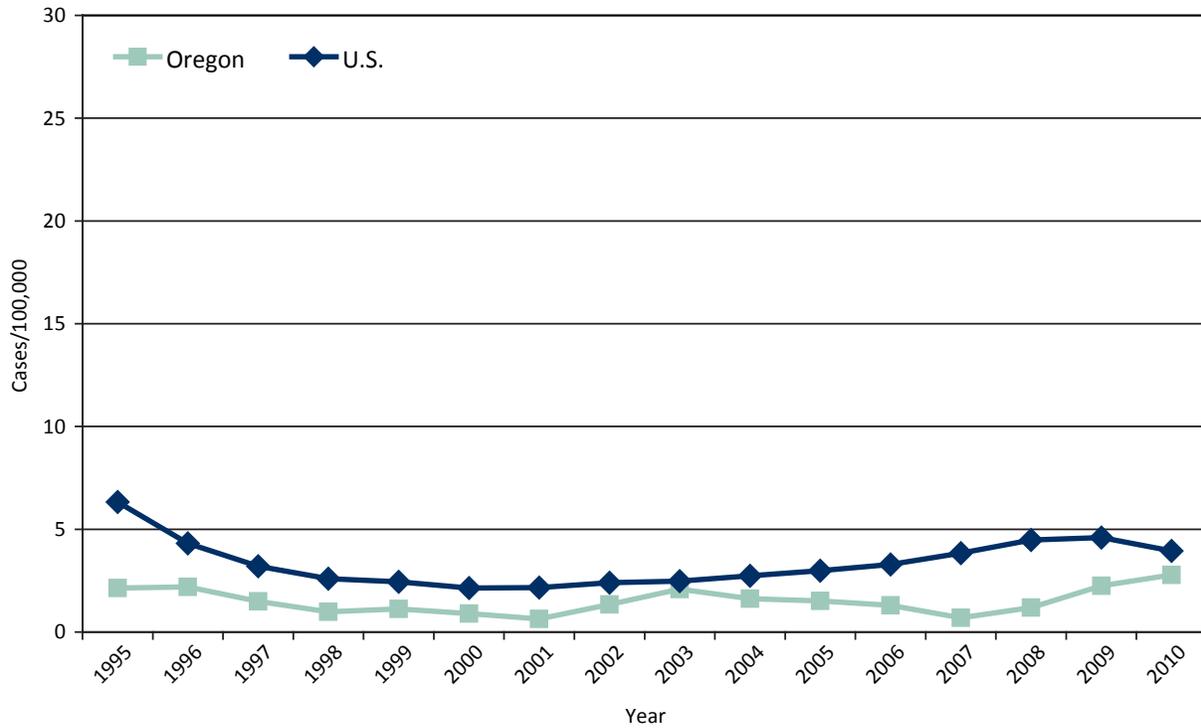
Early syphilis by year: Oregon, 1988–2010



Incidence of early syphilis by age and sex: Oregon, 2010



Incidence of primary and secondary syphilis: Oregon vs. nationwide, 1995–2010



Incidence of early syphilis by county of residence: Oregon, 2000–2010

