Chlamydia and Gonorrhea Prenatal Testing

Percentage of Live Births for which Mother was tested, by Zone, 2013-2014

Chlamydia and Gonorrhea are the two most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Alberta. Babies born to mothers infected with Chlamydia or Gonorrhea are at risk of developing neonatal conjunctivitis. Routine prenatal screening in Alberta is required for five communicable diseases; they are HIV, Hepatitis B, Syphilis, Rubella and Varicella. Screening for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea during pregnancy is one useful tool in preventing neonatal conjunctivitis in newborns. Current guidelines from the Public Health Agency of Canada ideally recommend testing in the first trimester for all women and repeat testing for high-risk women later in the pregnancy.

Screening highest for women in Edmonton and Calgary Zones

Today’s graph shows the percentage of live births where the mother was tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea during her pregnancy. Records of 105,716 live births during 2013 and 2014 were linked to chlamydia and gonorrhea laboratory tests. Overall, 66 per cent of mothers were tested with testing increasing from 59.9 to 71.3 per cent from 2013 and 2014.

Women living in the Edmonton and Calgary zones had the highest rate of testing over the two years at 72.5 and 81.3 per cent respectively. The North Zone had the third highest testing rate over the two year period at 57.6 per cent. Screening increased in all zones in 2014 with the largest increase occurring in the South Zone (4.5 to 58.1 per cent).

The Canadian Pediatric Society has recommended ending the use of antibiotic eye ointments after birth to prevent newborn infections from Chlamydia or Gonorrhea. Increasing screening rates will be important for both high-risk women and in geographies with lower screening to ensure that newborns in Alberta are protected.