Adult Syphilis Surveillance Staging When Primary and Secondary Syphilis Symptoms Are Present  
(Not to be used as guidance for treatment)

Current¹ chancre

Yes

Symptoms clinically compatible with secondary syphilis such as: rash, mucous patches, condyloma lata, alopecia?

No

T. pallidum directly detected? (Darkfield microscopy OR PCR)

Yes

CONFIRMED Primary Syphilis*  

No

PROBABLE Primary Syphilis*

Reactive nontreponemal (VDRL or RPR) OR Reactive treponemal (e.g., TP-PA, EIA)?

Yes

CONFIRMED Secondary Syphilis*

No

PROBABLE Secondary Syphilis*

T. pallidum directly detected? (Darkfield microscopy OR PCR)

Yes

Reactive nontreponemal (VDRL or RPR) AND Reactive treponemal (e.g., TP-PA or EIA)?

Yes

NOT a case

No

Secondary Syphilis

NOT a case

1 Current refers to the anchoring date of the original diagnosis, such as at time of original clinical diagnosis or positive screening test

*Neuro-, Ocular-, and Otic syphilis manifestations can occur at any stage. After stage of disease is determined, all cases should be assessed for clinical manifestations, which are then reported separately as “No,” “Verified,” “Likely,” “Possible,” or “Unknown.”

Resources:

Syphilis treatment guidelines: https://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/treatment.htm
Partner services: https://www.cdc.gov/std/program/Partner-Services-Quickguide-01-16-2014.pdf
Adult Syphilis Surveillance Staging
When Primary and Secondary Symptoms NOT Present
(Not to be used as guidance for treatment)

Primary or Secondary Syphilis Symptoms Currently Present?

Yes

Refer to flowchart for Adult Syphilis Surveillance Staging When Primary and Secondary Syphilis Symptoms Are Present

No

Reactive nontreponemal (VDRL or RPR) AND Reactive treponemal (e.g., TP-PA, EIA)?

Yes

Does patient have a documented prior history of syphilis diagnosis?

No

NOT a case

Yes

No

Does patient have a current test result demonstrating a ≥ 4-fold increase in nontreponemal test titer during the previous 12 months (and no evidence that increase was not sustained for >2 weeks)?

Yes

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

No

Within previous 12 months, did patient have sexual exposure to partner with primary, secondary, or early non-primary non-secondary syphilis?

Yes

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

No

Did the patient’s only sexual contact (sexual debut) occur within the previous 12 months?

Yes

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

No

PROBABLE Unknown Duration or Late Syphilis

Does patient have documented seroconversion OR a ≥ 4-fold increase in nontreponemal test titer during the previous 12 months (and no evidence that increase was not sustained for >2 weeks)?

Yes

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

No

^Does patient have a history of symptoms consistent with primary or secondary syphilis during the previous 12 months?

Yes

No

Within previous 12 months, did patient have sexual exposure to partner with primary, secondary, or early non-primary non-secondary syphilis?

Yes

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

No

PROBABLE Unknown Duration or Late Syphilis

Does patient have documented seroconversion OR a ≥ 4-fold increase in nontreponemal test titer during the previous 12 months (and no evidence that increase was not sustained for >2 weeks)?

Yes

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

No

^Does patient have a history of symptoms consistent with primary or secondary syphilis during the previous 12 months?

Yes

No

Within previous 12 months, did patient have sexual exposure to partner with primary, secondary, or early non-primary non-secondary syphilis?

Yes

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

No

PROBABLE Unknown Duration or Late Syphilis

Does patient have a current nontreponemal test titer demonstrating a ≥ 4-fold increase from the last nontreponemal test titer > 12 months ago (and no evidence increase was not sustained for >2 weeks)?

Yes

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

No

Evidence of having acquired disease within past 12 months?

Yes

NOT a new case

No

PROBABLE Unknown Duration or Late Syphilis

Does patient have a current nontreponemal test titer demonstrating a ≥ 4-fold increase from the last nontreponemal test titer > 12 months ago (and no evidence increase was not sustained for >2 weeks)?

Yes

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

No

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

Does patient have a documented prior history of syphilis diagnosis?

Yes

No

Does patient have a current test result demonstrating a ≥ 4-fold increase in nontreponemal test titer during the previous 12 months (and no evidence that increase was not sustained for >2 weeks)?

Yes

PROBABLE Early Non-primary Non-secondary Syphilis

No

Evidence of having acquired disease within past 12 months?

Yes

PROBABLE Unknown Duration or Late Syphilis

No

PROBABLE Unknown Duration or Late Syphilis

^Current refers to the anchoring date of the original diagnosis, such as at time of original clinical diagnosis or positive screening test

“Neuro-, Ocular-, and Otic syphilis manifestations can occur at any stage. After stage of disease is determined, all cases should be assessed for clinical manifestations, which are then reported separately as "No," "Verified," "Likely," "Possible," or "Unknown."