Syphilis in pregnancy: Antenatal care

Risk assess all women

Universal risk
- All pregnant women

Increased risk
- Woman or her partner identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Adolescent pregnancy
- STI in current pregnancy or last 12 months
- Ongoing sexual links in high prevalence countries (woman or partner)

High risk
- Sexual contact with infectious syphilis case
- Woman or partner identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander AND reside in an outbreak declared area
- Substance use – particularly methamphetamine (‘ice’)
- Woman’s partner is MSM
- Late, limited or no antenatal care
- Engages in high risk sexual activity

Discuss case with QSSS and expert practitioner

Assessment
- Obstetric history
- Sexual history
- Previous diagnosis of syphilis
- History of previous treatment
- Symptoms of syphilis
- Clinical examination
  o PCR swab of lesions

Treatment required?

Develop and document plan of care with QSSS and expert practitioner to:
- Identify treatment appropriate for stage of syphilis and history
- Facilitate contact tracing/treatment
- Promote maternal and neonatal serological follow-up
- Monitor effect of maternal treatment

Treatment
- Infectious syphilis
  o Benzathine penicillin 1.8 g (2.4 million units) IM once
- Late latent or unknown duration
  o Benzathine penicillin 1.8 g (2.4 million units) IM weekly for three weeks (no more than 9 days between doses*)
- If penicillin allergy
  • Seek expert advice

Ongoing antenatal care
- Retest as per high risk women
- Perinatal assessment as indicated
- Discuss:
  o Risk of reinfection and prevention
  o Symptoms of syphilis
  o Importance of follow-up
- At birth, syphilis serology, placental histopathology and PCR

Routine care

*Recommend restart full course if a weekly dose missed

Expert practitioner: clinician with specialist knowledge and experience in the testing, result interpretation, management and treatment of syphilis in the pregnant woman and/or her baby

IM: intramuscular injection, MSM: Men who have sex with men, PCR: Polymerase Chain Reaction QSSS: Queensland Syphilis Surveillance Service, STI: sexually transmitted infection, <: less than ≤: less than or equal to

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