



**Health Alert**  
**From the Orange County Health Department**

March 17, 2015

**Ocular changes in syphilis clients**

**Please share with the providers in your practice**

**Ocular changes in syphilis patients**

Please see the quote below from Dr. Mobley of the NC Communicable Disease Branch regarding increased concerns about ocular symptoms of syphilis in clients with a positive syphilis test. Clinicians seeing patients with or suspected of having syphilis are asked to do the following:

*"I would also tell the STD nurses to not only take a second look at the client's eyes but make sure they ask about any changes in vision because the eye exam that can be done by a non-ophthalmologist may appear normal but the client (when asked) may endorse gradual onset of blurred vision or floaters, etc. They may not think to mention the symptoms, either because they think they are mild or attribute to need for glasses, but we want to make sure to capture those folks who've had subtle and not so subtle changes in their vision in association with a positive syphilis test." Quote from email from Dr. Victoria Mobley, 3/13/2015*

Though the message from Dr. Mobley is directed at health department nurses who are "Enhanced Role Nurses" and are able to do STD exams, it certainly applied to other providers as well.

For a visual aid for all STD clinicians please see the following link for pictures of ocular syphilis.  
<http://www.ask.com/pictures?q=ocular+syphilis&qsrc=8>

If you see a client with syphilis and discover any visual concerns, please let your local Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS) know by contacting the local health department and asking for a CD Nurse who will then inform the DIS. DIS are persons employed by the HIV/STD Branch at the State who ensure that syphilis clients and contacts are effectively treated, know and follow control measures and follow-up contacts. They make the detectives on NCIS look like rookies as they work to identify sources and contacts to newly diagnosed syphilis cases.

To reach Judy, call 919-245-2425.

As always, for urgent matters afterhours, please call 911 and ask for the Health Department person on call.