

**COMMUNICABLE  
DISEASE- CD  
CONNECT  
PROVIDER NEWSLETTER**

**INSIDE  
THIS  
ISSUE**

March 2022

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**PG. 2**  
UNDERSTANDING RABIES: A  
FREQUENT CARRIER

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**PG. 3**  
DO YOU KNOW WHO IS MOST AT  
RISK FOR AN STI? ARE YOU TESTING  
THE RIGHT PATIENTS?

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**PG. 4**  
HEPATITIS A OUTBREAKS ARE  
OCCURRING NATIONWIDE. HOW  
YOU CAN HELP PROVIDE  
EDUCATION AND INCREASE  
VACCINATION OF HIGH-RISK  
GROUPS.

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## **2022 PROVIDER NEWS**

### **ADDING COVID TO OUR ROUTINE**

Here in Iredell county, our local providers are an unmatched team dedicated to improving the health and wellness of our community. As the world continues to adapt to the ever-prevalent changes from the Covid-19 pandemic, we must take notice of the modifications that are needed in our practices in order to provide the most comprehensive care for patients and to adjust to the new needs of our county. This issue will highlight new data, resource tools, and best practices to keep you and your patients moving towards a life lived healthier.

# RABIES IN THE AIR

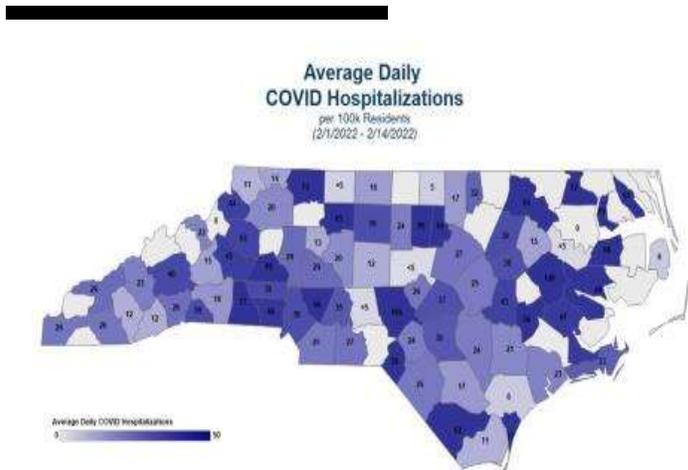
NOT JUST THE SEASON OF LOVE FOR HUMANS

Have you noticed there seem to be roadkill skunks every few hundred yards of your daily commute lately? Well, Valentine's Day isn't just for humans! Skunk's average breeding season is between mid-February to mid-April. With the season of love upon us, there is an increased risk of rabies transmission amongst animals, and thus an increased risk of human exposure to a rabid animal.

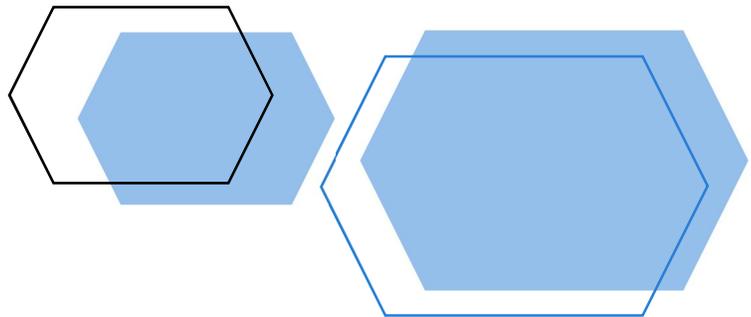
In Iredell County, rabies rates were highest in skunks in 2021, with 7 positive specimens tested by the North Carolina State Lab of Public Health. Local emergency rooms are the only providers of rabies post exposure prophylaxis. As a provider in Iredell County, do your part in keeping your personal pets up to date on their rabies vaccines- with records readily available. Love your patients by educating yourself on Rabies Risk Assessments and ensuring your office staff are familiar with the referral process for rabies PEP and mandatory reporting of potential human rabies exposures.

For additional information, please contact the Iredell County Health Department at 704-878-5300 or Iredell County Animal Services and Control at 704-878-5335, or refer to the NC Rabies Manual algorithms:

<https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/lhds/manuals/rabies/human.html>



Note: Data in the above map reflect the average daily COVID-19 related hospitalizations in the previous five weeks (2/1/2022 - 2/14/2022) by county. The values are normalized to rates per 100,000 residents. Data are imputed as "0" for unaffiliated services in counties where the average number of hospitalizations is less than 5.



# COVID TODAY

In the last two years our communities have struggled against the toll of life in a world of Coronavirus. The damages were not only physical but also emotional, and though we still must remain diligent to educate patients about the best choices they can make with regards to covid-19 treatment and prevention, we now can look ahead to the future as we continue to adapt to life with this virus.

With a change in our trends and tools we can adapt our response to the current phase: moving from acute crisis response to long term disease management. We will remain vigilant and respond to changes in the virus, ensuring the public is well informed, and protecting those who are most at risk for severe illness with covid-19.

Please review the following documents for further information about the next phase of North Carolina's Covid-19 response plan:

<https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/media/3913/download?attachment>

<https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/about-covid-19/latest-updates>



# SEXUAL HEALTH FOR ALL AGES

## BEST PRACTICES FOR STI TESTING

Unlike algebra, safe sex practices are an integral lesson that human beings throughout their lifespan should know. However, perhaps due to an absence of health classes, some in our own community are uninformed about their sexual health, and their testing options.

According to CDC guidelines, all adults and adolescents from ages 13 to 64 should be tested at least once for HIV. All sexually active women younger than 25 years should be tested for gonorrhea and chlamydia every year. Women 25 years and older with risk factors such as new or multiple sex partners or a sex partner who has an STD should also be tested for gonorrhea and chlamydia every year. Everyone who is pregnant should be tested for syphilis, HIV, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C starting early in pregnancy. Those at risk for infection should also be tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea starting early in pregnancy. All sexually active gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men should be tested at least once a year for HIV, hepatitis C, syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea. Those who have multiple or anonymous partners should be tested more frequently. People who have had oral or anal sex should be considered for throat and rectal testing options. Anyone who engages in sexual behaviors that could place them at risk for infection or shares injection drug equipment should get tested for HIV at least once a year.

At the Iredell County Health Department, we have documented an uptick in patients over the age of 31 seeking testing for STIs. As a provider, it is in your best interest to inform all of your patients about the importance of sexual health and perform appropriate screenings. Additionally, 23 positive syphilis cases were reported in 2020, and that value increased to 41 cases in 2021. Make it a point to review materials related to syphilis testing and treatment so we can minimize further cases.

For further information on testing and treatment recommendations made by the CDC please view the following links:

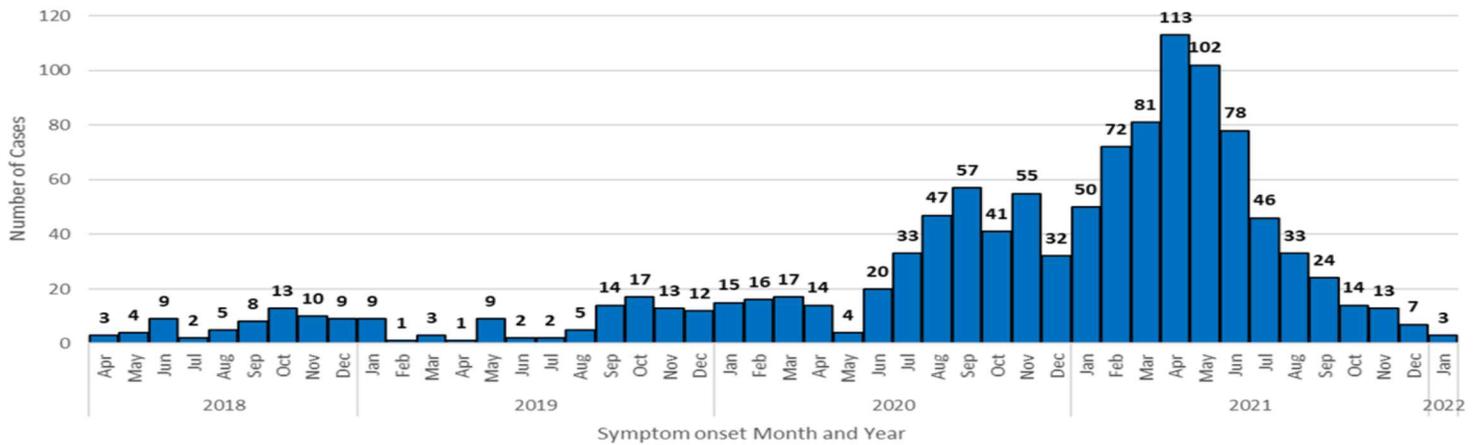
<https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/screening-recommendations.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/provider-resources.htm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/syphilis.htm>



## NC Outbreak Associated Hepatitis A Cases April 2018 - January 2022 (n=1,138)



# HEPATITIS-A UPDATE

## HOW YOUR PRACTICE IS ESSENTIAL TO PREVENTION

Since 2018, the North Carolina Communicable Disease branch has been tracking the Hepatitis A outbreak that continues to spread across the nation. The CDC has documented 43,648 cases of Hepatitis A infections associated with person-to-person transmission in 37 states from mid-2016 to January 2022. Cases are occurring in three main risk groups: Persons who use injection or non-injection drugs; persons experiencing homelessness; and men who have sex with men. North Carolina is not currently experiencing an outbreak of the same magnitude as other states; however, an increased number of Hepatitis A cases have been reported since April 2018, observable here in populations of persons that use drugs and men who have sex with men. In Iredell County, from July 19, 2021 through January 19, 2022 we have had 4 cases (2.1 per 100,000).

The Communicable Disease Branch is working closely with many supporting partners to provide education and increase vaccination of high-risk groups. Providers are on the front lines in preventing further infections, and offering instruction to reduce risk of serious illness from Hepatitis A. It is imperative that providers conduct a screening to determine if their patients are in one of the risk groups described (a person experiencing homelessness, a person who uses injection or non-injection drugs, or a man who has sex with men) or determine if their patient has had contact with someone with hepatitis A- those patients will need to be educated and offered the safe and effective Hepatitis A vaccine. Additionally, patients should be reminded to always wash hands with soap and water after going to the bathroom, after changing diapers, and before preparing meals for themselves and others.

If you have any questions about this illness, or need information on services the county offers please call the Iredell County Health Department at 704-878-5300. If you require more information on the outbreak or programs to better serve your patients, please examine the subsequent sites and documents:

[https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/hepatitis/hepa\\_outbreak.html](https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/cd/hepatitis/hepa_outbreak.html)

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/hep-a.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/pdfs/hepageneralfactsheet.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/havfaq.htm>