

# WAC 246-100-202 Prophylactic Treatment for Gonococcal Ophthalmia Neonatorum in Newborns

January 2009



## Why Rule Revision is Necessary

- The current rule references an outdated Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) policy statement from 1981 directing providers to instill silver nitrate solution in the newborn's eyes in order to prevent Ophthalmia Neonatorum caused by Gonococcal infection. This is an outdated standard of care.
- Some guardians/ parents are requesting an "opt-out" option to refuse treatment for newborn.
- Providers want a clear rule that reflects current standards of care and provides guidance when guardians/ parents refuse treatment for newborn.

## Importance of Prophylactic Treatment

- Sexually transmitted diseases are a major cause of neonatal eye infections. All 50 States require some eye treatment at birth to prevent gonorrheal eye infections.
- Gonococcal ophthalmia is a severe eye infection, appearing rapidly, and likely to cause blindness.
- Gonorrhea incidence rates are highest for women in their child bearing years. In Washington State there were 256.5 cases per 100,000 for women aged 20-24 according to 2007 data.

## Summary of Recommended Rule Changes

- Remove the option to administer 1.0% silver nitrate solution and incorporate updated treatment options within sub-section (1)(e) of WAC 246-100-202.
- Add language allowing legal guardians/parents to opt-out of the procedure.

## Anticipated Stakeholder Feedback

- Positive response to opt-out option allowing guardians/ parents to refuse treatment for newborn.
- Positive response to updating rule to current prophylactic treatment standards.
- Some healthcare providers may perceive that this revision does not adequately protect them from liability when guardians/ parents refuse treatment.

## Next Steps

- Draft language was e-mailed to stakeholders for comments December 2008.
- Present proposed rule to the statewide perinatal advisory committee on February 12, 2009.
- CR 102 hearing is planned for July 2009.

---

For more information, please contact:

Bat-Sheva Stein RN, MSN, Public Health Nurse Consultant

360.236.3582