

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



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## Overview

- Routine eye prophylaxis for newborn infants against gonococcal ophthalmia is a standard procedure in perinatal centers around the world. Gonococcal ophthalmia is an eye disease that has a usual onset between the second and fifth days of life. It was a common cause of blindness in infancy prior to the introduction of routine eye prophylaxis.

## Why Rule Revision is Necessary

- The current rule references an outdated DSHS policy statement from 1981 directing providers to instill silver nitrate solution in the newborn's eyes in order to prevent Ophthalmia Neonatorum caused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 This is an outdated standard of care.
- Providers want a clear rule that reflects current standards of care and provides guidance when guardians/ parents refuse treatment for their newborns.

## Importance of Newborn Prophylactic Eye 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
- Incorporate updated treatment options within WAC 246-100-202 sub-section (1)(e). These treatment options include Erythromycin and Tetracycline.
- Add language clarifying that providers must document when legal guardians/parents refuse treatment

## Stakeholder Feedback

- A request for feedback was sent by email to over 250 key stakeholders with a message to forward to other interested parties. The Department received verbal input during the State Perinatal Advisory Committee meeting February 12, 2009; the majority of comments were positive. Changes to the proposed language resulted from the feedback. In addition, 10 e-mails were sent to DOH and their content is summarized in your packets.