



NEWS RELEASE

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The North Dakota Department of Health Encourages Individuals to Become Educated During STD Awareness Month

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) is encouraging individuals and health care providers to increase conversation about Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) prevention. April is National STD Awareness Month, an observance created to increase awareness about STDs, including their transmission, prevention and treatment. STDs continue to be a major health threat in the United States, especially among adolescents and young adults. One in two sexually active persons will contract an STD by age 25, and each year, one in four teens contracts an STD. If undetected and left untreated, STDs can lead to severe health consequences, including ectopic pregnancy or infertility in females.

In North Dakota, 3,457 cases of chlamydia, 1,005 cases of gonorrhea, and 61 cases of syphilis were reported to the NDDoH in 2016. These numbers reflect an 8.5 percent increase in chlamydia, almost a 50 percent increase in gonorrhea and a 42 percent increase in syphilis compared to 2015.

The NDDoH encourages individuals to focus on appropriate screening and treatment of STDs. The following STD prevention messages aim to raise awareness, help healthcare providers protect their patients, and empower individuals to take charge of their health:

- **Know Your Status. Protect Yourself.** It's important that you and your partner both be tested for STDs prior to starting a new sexual relationship. If this isn't possible, reduce your risk of contracting an STD by using condoms every time you have sex.
- **Treat Yourself by Treating Partners.** It's not enough for a person with an STD to be treated, but any person they have had sex with recently is also likely infected. If those partners aren't treated, and you have sex again, you will likely become reinfected.
- **Syphilis Strikes Back.** Nationally, syphilis is currently at levels that have not been seen in more than 20 years. The following groups should be screened for syphilis:
 - All men who have sex with men (MSM) should be screened annually
 - All pregnant women should be screened during their first trimester

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- Pregnant women who are not in monogamous relationships should be also screened in their third trimester and at delivery.
 - Because syphilis is called “The Great Pretender,” its symptoms can look like many other diseases. You need to be screened if you are at risk for syphilis.
- **Get Tested for HIV.** In 2016, North Dakota had a 66 percent increase in the number of new diagnosis of HIV/AIDS from 2015. Remember, all patients diagnosed or being evaluated for STDs should also be tested for HIV. Everyone between 13 & 64 years should know their HIV status.

For more information, contact Sarah Weninger, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2366. Information about STDs can be found by visiting www.ndhealth.gov/STD/default.htm or <http://www.cdc.gov/STD/default.htm>.

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