

NEWS RELEASE

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Increase Your Understanding During STD Awareness Month

BISMARCK, N.D. – April is National Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) 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. Each year, one in four teens contract an STD. In addition, one in two sexually active persons will contract an STD by age 25. If undetected and left untreated, STDs can potentially lead to severe health consequences, including ectopic pregnancy or infertility in females.

In North Dakota, 3,280 cases of chlamydia, 967 cases of gonorrhea and 78 cases of syphilis were reported to the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) in 2017. These numbers reflect a 5.1 percent decrease in chlamydia, a 3.8 percent decrease in gonorrhea, and a 28 percent increase in syphilis compared to 2016.

“When it comes to protecting your sexual health, it’s important to know the risks, symptoms, and the steps you can take to protect yourself from STDs,” said Sarah Weninger, STD prevention coordinator for the NDDoH. “Abstinence is the most effective strategy to protect yourself. Also, reducing the number of sexual partners, being sexually active with only one person, and correct and consistent use of condoms will also reduce the risk.”

In addition to prevention, take charge of your health and:

- **Prepare** to honestly answer your health care provider’s questions about your sexual history.
- **Get tested.** Many STDs are curable.
- **Get treated** immediately to protect yourself from long-term, irreversible damage to your health.
- **Get retested.** It is common to get STDs more than once, so getting retested in three months is important, even if you and your partner took medicine.
- **Get vaccinated** for STDs that are vaccine preventable, including hepatitis B and human papillomavirus (HPV).
- **Communicate** with your sexual partner and your health care provider about your sexual history.
- **Get tested for HIV.** All patients diagnosed or being evaluated for STDs should also be tested for HIV. Everyone age 13 - 64 years should know their HIV status.

For more information, contact Sarah Weninger, NDDoH, at 701.328.2366. Information about STDs can be found at www.ndhealth.gov/std or www.cdc.gov/STD/default.htm.

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