

For Immediate Release

April is Sexually Transmitted Disease Awareness Month SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES ON THE RISE IN TRI-COUNTY

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April 2009 is Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Awareness Month. Not a pleasant topic I know, but it is critically important you know the facts. In 2006, more than 1 MILLION people in the US became infected with Chlamydia, the most common STD we see. In 2007 in our tri-county area, more than 260 people contracted Chlamydia

STD's are not just diseases found in the big cities, they are passed anywhere someone is having unprotected or unsafe sex and that includes right here in rural Michigan. In Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph counties, from 2004 to 2007, rates for Chlamydia were up 30%. More specifically, for females these rates are up 25% and for males they are up 45%.

Additionally (and unfortunately) we are now seeing an increase in Chlamydia in teens. For kids aged 15 through 19 years, the increase is more than 20% since 2004 with the greatest increase in males.

The most common STD's include Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Herpes, Human Papilloma Virus (Warts), Syphilis, and HIV/AIDS. We see all of these diseases here in West Michigan. All of these may be present without symptoms. Please take time to think about your risks, and if you are a parent of a teen or are a teen yourself, think long and hard about the life changing effects that some of these diseases can have. If you are at risk, or think you might be, get tested. Make an appointment by calling one of the numbers listed below.

Facts to remember:

- 3 out of 4 people infected with Chlamydia or Gonorrhea **may not have symptoms**.
- Males frequently **do not have symptoms**, i.e. abnormal discharge, burning on urination.
- If you have had one sexually transmitted disease, you should get tested for others.
- Not all sexually transmitted diseases are curable.
- Parties with alcohol and drug-sharing are common environments to get sexually transmitted diseases.
- There are lots of myths and incorrect information floating around, learn the facts before you become one of our statistics.

For more information about STD's and other communicable diseases

Visit us on the web at:

www.bhsj.org

Or call your local Health Department office at:

Coldwater
517-279-9561 x 143

Hillsdale
517-437-7395 x 110

Sturgis
269-659-4013 x 109

Three Rivers
269-273-2161 x 241