



CHLAMYDIA, GONORRHEA & SYPHILIS: STDS ON THE RISE

What are sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are infections passed from person to person through sexual activity. These infections can be bacterial, viral, or parasitic. While many STDs can be cured or treated with medication, untreated STDs can have severe health consequences, including infertility, pregnancy complications, cervical cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease, birth defects, and an up to five-fold increased risk of HIV transmission.

A public health crisis

The U.S. has the highest rate of STDs in the industrialized world, with approximately twenty million new cases of STDs each year. This costs the healthcare system \$16 billion dollars annually.¹ These rates are increasing in every demographic across the nation and can deeply affect people's lives. In 2019, the National Institutes for Health (NIH) deemed the rise of gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis in the U.S. a "major public health crisis."²

STDs in the U.S. are at the highest levels ever recorded and continue to increase yearly



P&S Syphilis increased

388%



Chlamydia increased

100%



Gonorrhea increased

74%



Congenital Syphilis increased

202%

cases, between 2003 and 2018

Reasons for concern: The cost of STDs in the U.S.

Health outcomes

STDs can be life threatening. If untreated, STDs can lead to serious health outcomes including pelvic inflammatory diseases, infertility, and even death. Congenital syphilis (mother-child) leads to infant death or inviability in up to 40% of cases and is on the rise. STDs also increase the chances of acquiring incurable infections like HIV. Bacterial STIs cause 10% of all new HIV cases in the U.S. among men who have sex with men (MSM).³

Hefty price tag

STD prevention reduces health care costs. It's estimated that STDs, including HIV, burden the health care system with \$16 billion in health care costs a year.

¹ www.cdc.gov/std/stats/sti-estimates-fact-sheet-feb-2013.pdf

² www.contagionlive.com/news/nih-officials-warn-increasing-rates-of-stis-constitute-public-health-crisis

³ Jeb Jones, Kevin Weiss, Jonathan Mermin, et al. Proportion of Incident HIV Cases among Men Who Have Sex with Men Attributable to Gonorrhea and Chlamydia: A Modeling Analysis, Sex Transm Dis, 2019 Jun;46(6):357-363



Syphilis

Syphilis is an STD that is spread during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. If left untreated syphilis can cause serious health problems, and if left untreated in a pregnant woman, the infection can be transmitted from the mother to child (congenital syphilis). Without adequate treatment, syphilis can spread to the brain and nervous system (neurosyphilis) and in some cases, lead to death.

Congenital Syphilis

Congenital syphilis is when a pregnant mother who has syphilis spreads the disease to her unborn child.

Once nearly eradicated, congenital syphilis is on the rise. Up to 40% of congenital syphilis cases may result in still birth or infant death, and others may result in birth defects.

Syphilis in the U.S.

The United States is currently seeing high and climbing rates of primary and secondary syphilis, the infectious stages of the disease.

388%

Increase in Infectious Syphilis Cases

since 2003

310%

Increase in Syphilis in Women

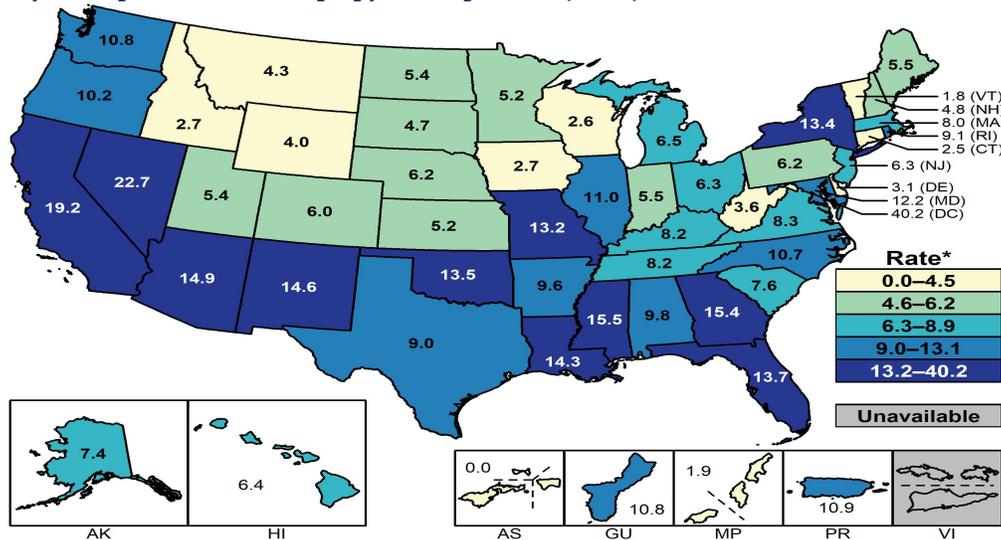
since 2003

\$45

Million¹

estimated amount that syphilis will cost the health care system

Rates of reported primary and secondary syphilis by state (2018)²



* Per 100,000.

Reasons for concern

Increases of syphilis among women are of particular concern because as the rate of primary and secondary syphilis increases among women of childbearing age, the likelihood of congenital syphilis increases.

Congenital syphilis can cause a baby to be born too soon, too small, or even lead to still birth. If a baby is born with syphilis, the baby may become blind or deaf or have problems with teeth, bones, and joints. Congenital syphilis results in infant death 40% of the time.

Syphilis can lead to long-term health concerns if left untreated, including brain or eye damage. It also puts people at elevated risk for HIV. Therefore, the increasing rates of syphilis are alarming and have real health care impacts for many men and women in the United States.

¹Owusu-Edusei K, et al. *The estimated direct medical cost of selected sexually transmitted infections in the United States, 2008.* Sex Transm Dis 2013; 40(3): pp. 197-201.
² www.cdc.gov/stdstats18/figures/37.htm



Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea is a common infection that is found in the genitals, rectum, and throat. Gonorrhea is spread through vaginal, anal, or oral sex. If left untreated in a pregnant woman, gonorrhea can be passed from mother to child.

Gonorrhea in the U.S.

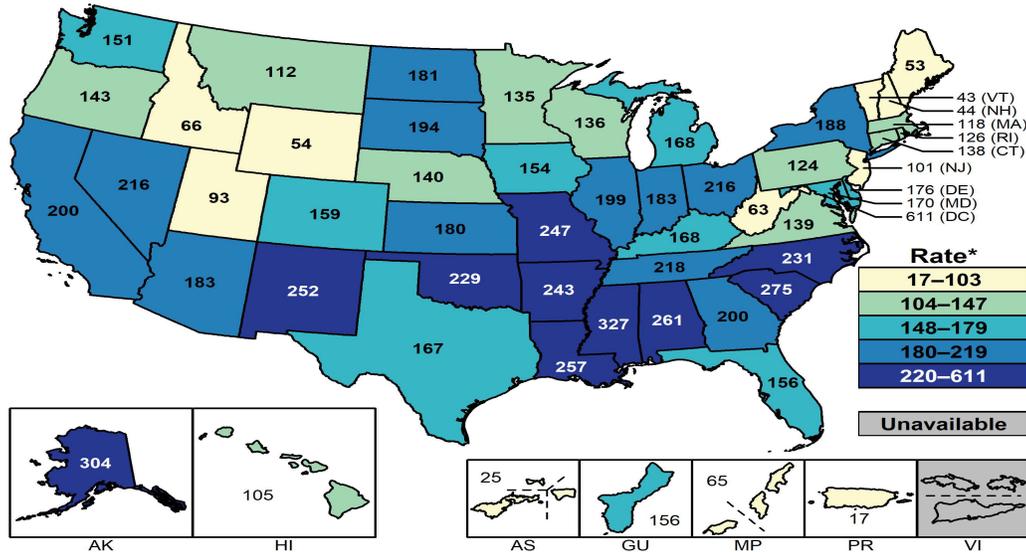
The United States has seen a dramatic rise in gonorrhea. Increases have been observed nationwide and there is growing concern about antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea.

74%
Increase in
Gonorrhea
Cases
since 2003

231%
Increase in the
Western U.S.
since 2003

\$198.4
Million¹
annual cost of gonorrhea to the
healthcare system

Rates of reported gonorrhea cases by state (2018)²



* Per 100,000.

Reasons for concern

Gonorrhea can cause serious, potentially lifelong health effects for men and women. Women can experience pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), infertility, and possible deadly ectopic pregnancies. The infection in men can cause a painful condition in the testicle area and can lead to infertility. In some cases, gonorrhea can spread to the blood or joints and become life-threatening.

Untreated gonorrhea also increases an individual's chance of getting or transmitting HIV.

Gonorrhea is becoming resistant to all classes of antibiotics. In 2018, CDC named antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea among the three most urgent threats of its kind in the country.

¹Wusu-Edusei K, et al. The estimated direct medical cost of selected sexually transmitted infections in the United States, 2008. Sex Transm Dis 2013; 40(3): pp. 197-201.
² www.cdc.gov/stdstats18/figures/16.htm



Chlamydia

Chlamydia is spread through vaginal, anal, or oral sex. If left untreated, chlamydia can cause serious damage to a woman's reproductive health system including pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility.

Chlamydia in the U.S.

The United States has seen a dramatic increase in chlamydia since 2003 and rates continue to rise by the year.

100%

Increase in Chlamydia Cases

since 2003

221%

Increase in Chlamydia in Men

since 2003

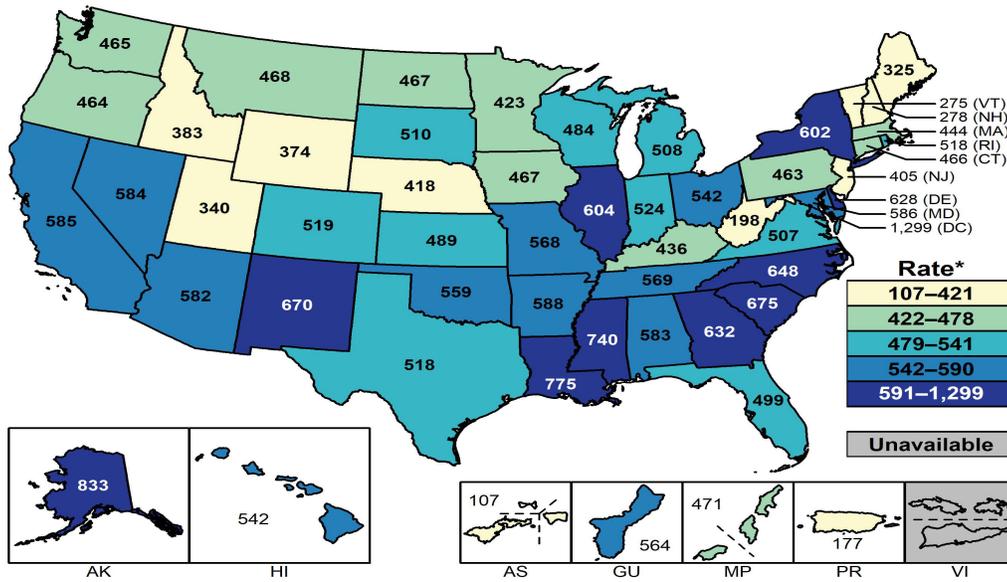
\$632.3

Million¹

annual cost of chlamydia to the healthcare system

This includes pelvic inflammatory disease

Rates of reported chlamydia cases by state (2018)²



* Per 100,000.

Reasons for concern

Chlamydia can have dramatic long-term effects for men and women. Women can experience pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, and potentially deadly ectopic pregnancies. The infection in men can sometimes spread to the testicles and cause infertility. Untreated chlamydia also increases an individual's chance of getting or transmitting HIV.

¹Owusu-Edusei K, et al. The estimated direct medical cost of selected sexually transmitted infections in the United States, 2008. Sex Transm Dis 2013; 40(3): pp. 197-201.
² www.cdc.gov/stdstats18/figures/3.htm

NCSDD's Role in combating STDs



Capacity Building

NCSDD seeks to build the capacity—skills, knowledge base, infrastructure, and resources—of our members by providing technical assistance and training, developing and sharing informational resources, and facilitating peer learning and support.



Policy and Advocacy

NCSDD educates policy makers, public health professionals, organizational allies and the general public about why STDs are a public health priority and what is needed to address them most effectively.



National Leadership and Strategic Communications

NCSDD serves as, and amplifies, the voice of our members. We seek to create a sense of urgency around the issue of STDs and communicate how the issue fits into the broader sexual health landscape.



Promoting Health Equity

NCSDD ensures that disproportionately affected communities—those at the heart of the U.S. STD epidemic—are the focus of STD programs and services and receive the most attention and support.



Organizational Strengthening

NCSDD strives to diversify financial support, build staff capacity, and enhance board leadership to maximize organizational sustainability and impact.

What you can do:

Get informed

There are policies that interact with local STD program including: expedited partner therapy, third trimester syphilis testing in high risk areas, extragenital testing, and needle exchange programs.

Support STD prevention

Federal and State level STD funding supports important staff who are on the front lines of STD prevention, including Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS) and other department of health staff. It also supports testing, treatment, and prevention efforts. More resources and funding results in health departments being able to reach more people and reduce or lower healthcare costs of STDs.

Connect with your local STD program and NCSDD

Visit one of our resources listed below to find out how you can play an active role in curtailing the nation's STD epidemic.

Resources:

Health Departments across the United States are responsible for tracking, preventing, and treating cases of STDs. For more information about what your state is doing for syphilis, chlamydia or gonorrhea visit your local health department's website or reach out to NCSDD and we can connect you

For information about how to support local health departments visit National Coalition of STD Director's (NCSDD) website at: ncsddc.org

For information about how to prevent and identify syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia, visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website at: cdc.gov/std/syphilis, cdc.gov/std/gonorrhea, or cdc.gov/std/chlamydia



**National Coalition
of STD Directors**

ncsddc.org