

MDH report: Sharp increase in STD rates

Written by

Wednesday, 23 April 2014 14:29



A new report from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) shows significant increases in the rates of some sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) from 2012 to 2013. While the state's overall STD rate increased 10 percent, the increases were much higher for syphilis (up 64 percent) and gonorrhea (up 26 percent).

The report is available on the MDH website at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/std>. According to Dr. Ed Ehlinger, Minnesota Commissioner of Health, the increased STD rates documented in the report underscore the importance of prevention, testing, and awareness.

"Untreated STDs can have serious health consequences," Commissioner Ehlinger said. "Testing, diagnosing and treating these diseases in their early stages will prevent long-term health problems and slow their spread. Since most STDs don't show symptoms, it's important for sexually active people to get tested each year or when involved with a new partner."

Reportable STDs in Minnesota include chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis. There were 23,133 cases reported in Minnesota in 2013, compared to 21,465 in 2012 and 19,547 in 2011. Key findings within the report include:

- Chlamydia (up 4 percent) is the number one reported infectious disease in the state, and it reached a new high of 18,724 cases in 2013 compared to 18,048 in 2012. The majority of cases occurred in teens and young adults within the ages of 15 to 24. Nearly one in three cases occurred in greater Minnesota.
- Gonorrhea (up 26 percent) remains the second most commonly reported STD in Minnesota, with 3,872 cases reported in 2013 compared to 3,082 in 2012. Fifty-eight percent of all gonorrhea cases occurred among the 15- to 24-year-old age group and 80 percent of cases occurred in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.
- Primary and secondary syphilis cases (up 64 percent) are also a problem, with 193 cases in 2013 compared to 118 in 2012. New infections continued to be centered in the Twin Cities area and among males, particularly men who have sex with men (MSM). The rate of MSM co-infected with syphilis and HIV was 46 percent. There also was an increase in early syphilis cases among women in 2013, with 30 cases in 2013 compared to 18 in 2012.

The MDH report also shows higher infection rates for chlamydia and gonorrhea among communities of color and American Indians when compared to whites. Increases in syphilis infection rates were seen among African-American, Asian and white MSM.

MDH report: Sharp increase in STD rates

Written by

Wednesday, 23 April 2014 14:29

"These disparities exist among populations that have the fewest opportunities to access prevention programs and testing due to social, medical and/or income disadvantages," Commissioner Ehlinger said. "We need to expand our partnerships with our most impacted communities to ensure these services are available and being used."

Chlamydia and gonorrhea can lead to infertility in women and men and can be passed from an infected woman to her newborn children, causing premature delivery, infant pneumonia and blindness. Untreated gonorrhea can spread to organs and joints leading to life-threatening conditions. Untreated syphilis can cause blindness, mental illness, dementia and death.

People can prevent getting or spreading STDs by abstaining from sexual contact, delaying the start of sexual activity, limiting the number of sexual partners, always using latex condoms during sex, and by not sharing needles for drug use, piercing or tattooing. Partners of STD-infected patients also need to get tested and treated to prevent re-infection or spread to others.

Health care providers can play a critical role in reducing STD rates. Health care providers should assess the sexual risks among their patients and provide the necessary STD screenings according to guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Health care providers are also responsible for making a reasonable attempt to ensure the treatment of their patient's sex partners.

MDH recommends that partners of STD infected patients get tested and treated at the same time to prevent re-infection. Expedited partner therapy (EPT) allows physicians to dispense prescriptions or medications to their patients who have tested positive for chlamydia or gonorrhea. The patient can give those prescriptions or medications to the patient's sexual partners who are uninsured, unwilling or unable to get to a clinic.

Action steps and resources MDH provides for STD control, monitoring, prevention, testing and treatment can be found on the MDH website at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/std>. The site features the complete Minnesota STD Surveillance Report for 2013, as well as STD fact sheets, information about expedited partner therapy, National STD Awareness Month (April) campaign materials, and a link to STD treatment guidelines.

Additional resources available online include the Minnesota Chlamydia Partnership (MCP) action plan to reduce and prevent chlamydia in the state, at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/mcp> and the MDH Partner Services Program, which provides follow-up services to people with HIV, syphilis, and those referred from clinics with untreated chlamydia and gonorrhea and their sexual partners who may need examination and treatment. That information can be found at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/stds/partnerservices.html>

For confidential information about the prevention, testing locations and treatment of STDs, call the Minnesota Family Planning & STD Hotline, toll free, at 1-800-78-FACTS (voice or TTY), 651-645-9360 (Metro area), Text ASKMN to 66746, or visit their website at: <http://sexualhealth>

MDH report: Sharp increase in STD rates

Written by
Wednesday, 23 April 2014 14:29

[mn.org/](#)

-MDH-