

# Public Health, Epidemiology and Prevention

## PEP Talk

Pinellas County Health Department • April 2009

### April is STD Awareness Month Talk, Test & Treat to Prevent the Spread of STDs



**Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)** are a serious health threat. In Pinellas County alone, 3,878 cases of one type of STD, chlamydia, were reported in 2008.

In Florida, nearly 97,000 cases of STDs were reported in 2008 – and approximately 66 percent were in individuals between the ages of 15 and 24. In the U.S., approximately 19 million cases of STDs are reported every year.

STDs are particularly a threat for young women, African Americans, men who have sex with men and people who live in poverty or have limited access to health care.

STDs are infectious (contagious) diseases that spread from person to person through intimate contact.

STDs include human papillomavirus (HPV), herpes simplex virus, HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis, and syphilis. Most STDs are easy to diagnose and treat, but they often do not have symptoms and go undetected.

Bacterial STDs, specifically chlamydia and gonorrhea, can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). PID increases the risk for infertility and ectopic pregnancy.

Viral STDs, such as the herpes simplex virus, have a lifelong impact on physical, psychological and emotional health. There is no cure for the herpes simplex virus.

STDs are the most commonly reported infectious diseases in the U.S. Fortunately, education, early detection and proper treatment can have a positive impact in changing the bad outcomes caused by STDs.

This year's STD awareness month emphasizes the "3T's" – **Talk, Test and Treat** – to prevent the spread of STDs.

**TALK:** Talk with your partner and your health care provider about risk factors, safer sex methods and testing.

**TEST:** Make an appointment with your health provider or contact the health department for STD

testing. Screening is particularly important since many STDs often do not have signs or symptoms.

**TREAT:** Treat the disease to avoid more health problems. Treatment of an STD depends on the type of STD. Your doctor or health provider will know what treatment is best. Many STDs are easily treated and cured. Unfortunately, not all STDs can be cured.

The best "treatment" for STDs is prevention. Avoiding multiple sexual partners and using condoms during sex can prevent many STDs. Other forms of birth control do not prevent STDs.



**For information about STD's, testing, prevention and treatment, please contact our STD clinic at (727) 824-6911.**

# National Public Health Week is April 6 –12

## Building the Foundation for a Healthy America

For more than a decade, communities around the country have observed National Public Health Week to help protect and improve our nation's health.

This year's goal is to raise awareness of public health's critical role in ensuring a healthy America.

Although we spend more money on health care than any other nation, the U.S. falls behind in many important measures of what it means to be healthy.

Life expectancy has reached a record high of 78.1 years, but still ranks 46th in the world – behind Japan and most of Europe, as well as countries such as Guam, South Korea and Jordan.



A baby born in the U.S. is more likely to die before its first birthday than a child born in almost any other developed country. Among developed nations, only Latvia has a higher newborn death rate

than the United States.

Public health is a crucial part of the solution because it affects every facet of our lives: our nation, communities, workplaces, schools and homes.

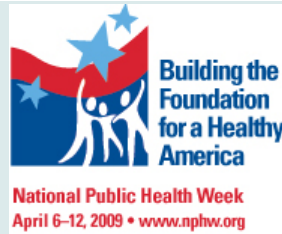
Please support National Public Health Week. **And, ask yourself...**

### What if there was no health department?

**Just imagine...** You get out of bed in the morning and notice several mosquito bites on your skin. You wonder if you could have contracted West Nile Virus.

Old tires in your neighbor's yard provide an ideal place for the mosquito that transmits the disease. Because there is no health department, there is no state lab to check to see if you contracted West Nile Virus from a mosquito bite.

Your wife is pregnant and she needs to make sure she and her unborn baby receive the nutritious diet they need. There is no health department to help your wife during her pregnancy through the WIC program, Healthy Start and other programs for



moms and children.

Your children are in the other room, sick with measles or mumps. There was no health department to give immunizations to protect them against these diseases.

A co-worker is coughing his head off and occasionally spitting up blood because he has TB and doesn't even know it. There is no health department to give TB tests or to treat and control the disease.



Several other co-workers have the flu. There is no health department give flu shots and to help you learn ways to protect yourself and your family from catching contagious diseases.

That night, a news bulletin comes on TV informing you that a terrorist has released a biological weapon. The report indicates it is probably smallpox. There is no health department to set up mass clinics to help prevent the spread of smallpox. Also, volunteers to staff the clinics have not been trained because there is no health department to oversee the training.



You listen to the drip of a water faucet you know is bringing contaminated water from your well into your home. There is no health department to help keep the water supply safe. You toss and turn, and try to get some sleep anyway.

When you wake, you realize it was only a dream. You call the health department just to make sure.

The friendly voice on the phone answers, "This is the Pinellas County Health Department, how may we help you?" You breathe a sigh of relief. It

was only a dream.



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