



Charlie Crist
Governor

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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Know the Facts & Get Tested
April is STD Awareness Month

The Pinellas County Health Department encourages you to learn about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), one of our community's most persistent health problems. Public awareness and knowledge are critically low around the country and STDs remain at epidemic levels.

Here are the latest U.S. statistics from the American Social Health Association (ASHA):

- One in two Americans will contract an STD at some point in their lifetime.
- An estimated 65 million Americans are living with a viral STD.
- STDs are spreading at a rate of 15 million new cases each year.
- One in two sexually active persons will contract an STD by age 25.
- One in four teens contract an STD each year.
- One in four Americans have genital herpes and 1.6 million new infections occur each year.

In Pinellas County:

- 4,821 new cases of STDs were reported in 2006.
- 934 new cases of STDs have been reported so far in 2007.
- Of the 934 cases above, 625 are cases of chlamydia.

The Bad News about STDs

Undiagnosed and untreated STDs can lead to lifelong health problems, even death. STDs can lead to:

- Damage to joints, heart, reproductive organs and the brain.
- Genital (penile in males or cervical in women) or anal cancers in both men and women.
- Increased risk of tubal pregnancies – which can be fatal.
- Infertility (unable to reproduce) in both men and women.
- Liver problems and cancer.
- Blindness, deafness, birth defects, early delivery or stillborns in infants during pregnancy or childbirth.
- Increased risk of transmitting or getting HIV by three times compared to someone without an STD.

Many STDs have no symptoms or symptoms are too minor to see. Many people rely on symptoms to appear before they become concerned. Unless they're detected and treated, STDs can persist, even though symptoms may go away.

The only way to know if you have an STD is to get tested. There is no lifelong immunity once a person has had an STD or is treated. You can get infected again and again.

(MORE)



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The Good News About STDs

STDs are largely preventable and most are curable or can be controlled to prevent complications. Here are some ways to keep yourself safe from STDs:

- The most reliable way to avoid an STD is to abstain from sex or be in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner.
- Latex condoms, when used consistently and correctly, are highly effective in preventing transmission of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. In addition, correct and consistent condom use of latex condoms can reduce the risk of other STDs.
- There are vaccines available to prevent hepatitis A or hepatitis B infections.
- There is a new vaccine for young women and girls that protects against infection from certain strains of the genital wart virus (HPV) associated with cervical cancer.

The Pinellas County Health Department has STD clinics and programs for confidential testing and treatment at all five of our health center locations. Your private doctor may also treat STDs. If you don't know where to get help, call us or your private health care provider for information. Call us for more information at (727) 824-6911. All information you give will be private and confidential.

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MEDIA: STD backgrounder attached.

The Mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of our community through public and private partnerships in an environment that respects diversity.