



News from the Office of ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

NEWS RELEASE

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HEALTH COMMISSIONER CALLS ATTENTION TO IMPACT OF STD'S

Burstein Notes Rise in Chlamydia, Syphilis Cases; Urges Awareness, Prevention

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Erie County Commissioner of Health Dr. Gale Burstein today warned of the impact of sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) on adolescents and young adults. Estimates suggest that even though young people make up only 25% of the sexually experienced population, nearly half of new STD cases occur in persons aged 15-24 years.¹

Throughout April, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) is calling on health-care providers to initiate conversations about sexual health and deliver the recommended screenings and vaccinations to their patients. Teens should have some private time with their doctor during the health care visit for the opportunity to discuss sensitive issues. Stigma, lack of information and lack of access to health care are some of the factors contributing to high rates of STD's among teens and young adults.

"April is STD Awareness Month, and it is imperative that people have frank, honest discussions with their partners and their health care providers about sexual health," **Burstein said**. "Here in Erie County we have seen an alarming rise in reported chlamydia cases, with 5,065 cases reported in 2011. These are infections that can have long-lasting complications if they go undetected and untreated, including increasing a woman's risk for human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, ectopic pregnancy, and pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). Untreated chlamydia infections are also the #1 cause of preventable infertility."

Syphilis rates have also risen recently, particularly among young men who have sex with men. The Erie County STD clinic has seen a 40% rise in visits since 2010. "STD screenings, along with vaccinations, are essential to reducing the overall number of infections," **Burstein added**. "Regular screenings can help detect disease early and are effective in protecting the patient's health and preventing the spread of STD's to others. CDC recommends that all sexually active females 25 years and younger should be tested annually for chlamydia infection. Since many STD tests can be performed on urine specimens, an invasive genital exam is no longer needed. Vaccinations, such as the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, are also valuable tools for prevention. CDC recommends that all 11-12 year old males and females should receive the HPV vaccine. Additionally, it's important to remember that these infections do not respect socioeconomic status, ethnic background or where you live; they are equal-opportunity offenders."

For more information on Erie County's efforts to promote STD Awareness, visit <http://www2.erie.gov/health/> or call (716) 858-7690

For more information on CDC STD Awareness efforts, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/STDAwareness/>

- 1 Weinstock H, Berman S, Cates W Jr. Sexually transmitted diseases among American youth: incidence and prevalence estimates, 2000. *Perspect Sex Reprod Health* 2004; 36:6-10

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