

## News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **April is National STD Awareness Month**

(Las Vegas, Nev., - April 1, 2002) - Throughout the month of April, which is National Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Awareness Month, the Clark County Health District STD program, Office of AIDS and The American Social Health Association (ASHA) will disseminate information to the public regarding testing and treatment resources.

The STD rates of Clark County reflect the trends seen nationally. There has been a steady increase in both gonorrhea and chlamydia while syphilis rates have declined. (See attachment).

“There has been a significant improvement in the rates of new cases of syphilis, but the increase in other sexually transmitted diseases demonstrates the need for ongoing prevention and treatment programs,” said Dr. Donald Kwalick, chief health officer for the health district.

Currently the health district is following a syphilis elimination plan. Following the guidelines of the plan, elimination in Clark County is defined as two cases of primary or secondary syphilis per a population of 100,000. A total of four cases of secondary syphilis were reported to the health district in both 2000 and 2001.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are among the most common infectious diseases in the United States. More than 25 STDs affect approximately 15 million men and women in the United States each year. STDs may have no symptoms, particularly in women. When symptoms develop, they can be confused with those of other diseases. The direct and indirect costs of the major STDs, and their complications, are estimated to total at least \$10 billion. HIV infection costs are estimated to be an additional \$7 billion.

On March 4-7, 2002 the National STD Prevention Conference was held in San Diego, Calif., and the following information was released from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- More than 65 million people in the United States are currently living with an incurable STD.
- STDs affect men and women of all backgrounds and economic levels, and are most prevalent among young adults.
- One in five people in the United States has an STD.

(more)

- Two-thirds of all STDs occur in people 25 years of age or younger, with one in four new STD infections occurring in teenagers.
- At least one in four Americans will contract an STD at some point in their lives, but less than half of adult's ages 18 to 44 have been tested for an STD other than HIV/AIDS.
- Bacterial STDs can be treated and cured, but are often undetected and many STDs place the infected person at risk for HIV/AIDS.
  - Chlamydia is the most common of all the bacterial STDs with an estimated 3 million new cases occurring each year.
  - An estimated 650,000 new cases of gonorrhea occur each year in the United States.
  - Approximately 70,000 cases of syphilis occur annually.
- Viral STDs, for which there is currently no cure, have a lifelong impact on physical and emotional health.
  - Herpes is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases in the United States, with an annual estimate of one million new infections.
  - Human Papillomavirus (HPV) newly infects an estimated 5.5 million each year.
  - As many as 120,000 people are infected with hepatitis B through sexual transmission.
  - If STDs are left untreated, they can spread quickly and cause serious problems, including chronic pain, cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility.
  - An estimated 40 million Americans have genital herpes.
  - 40 million have HPV, the cause of genital warts.

For more information on STD screenings and HIV testing, contact the Health District STD program at 942-9303.

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