



SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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Healthy People in Healthy Communities

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From: Sam Perez, Public Health Information Officer

Subject: Rising Rates of Sexually Transmitted Diseases throughout California, including San Benito County

San Benito County, CA –Rates of sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) are rising throughout the state of California, including in San Benito County. Public Health officials are urging everyone who is sexually active, to "take charge of their sexual health". Young people and men who have sex with men are at particular risk and should get tested more often.

STD testing is now more important than ever. STD rates have been increasing steadily in California since 2013. The California Department of Public Health recently reported that over 300,000 cases of sexually-transmitted diseases were reported in the 2017, a 45-percent increase since 2102. Rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis continue to grow, and syphilis has re-emerged as a major public health concern. It is part of an overall upward trend for STD's in the U.S. Cases of syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia reached a record high at nearly 2.3 million in 2017. San Benito County saw a rise in syphilis cases from 8 in 2013 to 42 in 2017.

Syphilis, when transmitted from mother to baby during pregnancy or delivery, can be devastating. Congenital syphilis can cause premature birth, low birth weight, birth defects, blindness, hearing loss, and even death. Mother to child transmission can occur at any state of syphilis infection. Prenatal screening and prompt treatment for pregnant women is essential for preventing these devastating birth outcomes. In California, it is required by law that pregnant women get tested for syphilis at their first prenatal visit. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment in pregnancy prevented 70% of potential congenital syphilis cases in 2017.

State health officials said cases of congenital syphilis jumped from 20 in 2012 to 283 in 2017. Only 14 counties reported congenital syphilis cases in 2012, while 27 of 58 counties had 1 or more congenital syphilis cases in 2017. San Benito County joined the ranks of impacted counties in 2019. State health officials said cases of congenital syphilis jumped from eight in 2013 to 47 in 2017.

Chlamydia is the most common reportable disease in San Benito County. This disease, like most STD's, is easily preventable and treatable, but can cause serious health problems (such as infertility) if left untreated. In San Benito County, chlamydia remains a steady threat. Between 2013 and 2017, chlamydia rates jumped from 201 cases to 244 cases. Most of these cases are found in young women. National statistics estimate that one out of every two young people will have an STD before age 25.

"Quite often, someone can have an STD and not show any symptoms. The only way to stop the ongoing spread of STD's is for more people to get checked regularly and encourage their partners to get checked as well," said Dr. Gail Newel, Health Officer for San Benito County. "In most cases, a prescription can be given for both the patient and the partner, making treatment more convenient and more effective."

For more information regarding prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, please go to the Centers for Disease Control website at <https://www.cdc.gov>, the California Department of Public Health website at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov>, call Public Health Services at (831) 637-5367 or go to our website at <http://hhsa.cosb.us>.

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