



April 9, 2019

STD Awareness Campaign Encourages Youth to Get Tested and Treated for STDs

April is STD Awareness Month, and this year the Barry-Eaton District Health Department (BEDHD) is urging young adults to “Get Yourself Tested.” Three common STDs—chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis—are surging across the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Young people are especially hard-hit. According to The CDC, half of all STDs are in people under the age of 25. The purpose of this year’s theme is to encourage young people to get tested and treated for STDs and HIV to protect their health and that of their partners.

In 2017, there were more than 2 million cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis, which was the fourth year in a row that STD rates had shown an increase. Between 2013 and 2017, syphilis cases nearly doubled, gonorrhea cases increased by 67%, and chlamydia cases remained at record highs. Both Barry and Eaton County saw an increase in STD cases again last year. From 2017 to 2018, the number of Chlamydia cases increased by 5.4% and gonorrhea cases increased by 40.5% within the two counties.

Some STDs can lead to serious health problems if they’re not treated. For example, chlamydia, if left untreated, can make it difficult or impossible for a woman to get pregnant and having herpes or gonorrhea can increase your chances of getting HIV. The good news is, all STDs, even HIV, are treatable, and most are curable. The sooner you get tested, the sooner you can take action to protect your health and the health of your partner(s).

The Get Yourself Tested (GYT) campaign encourages young people to get tested and treated for STDs and HIV to protect their and their partners’ health. GYT also helps young people understand that STD testing is quick, simple, and usually painless. The campaign highlights the importance of having open and honest conversations with healthcare providers about sexual history to ensure the right STD tests are administered and other critical information about prevention is shared.

Getting tested for STDs is one of the most important things a person can do to protect their health! If you are unsure which STD tests to receive, the CDC provides these suggestions:

- **All adults and adolescents from ages 13 to 64** should be tested at least once for HIV.
- **All sexually active women** younger than 25 years should be tested for gonorrhea and chlamydia every year. Women 25 years and older with risk factors such as new or multiple sex partners or a sex partner who has an STD should also be tested for gonorrhea and chlamydia every year.
- **All pregnant women** should be tested for syphilis, HIV, and hepatitis B starting early in pregnancy. At-risk pregnant women should also be tested for chlamydia and gonorrhea starting early in pregnancy. Testing should be repeated as needed to protect the health of mothers and their infants.
- **All men who have sex with men** should be tested at least once a year for syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea. Those who have multiple or anonymous partners should be tested more frequently for STDs (i.e., at 3- to 6-month intervals).
- **Men who have sex with men** may benefit from more frequent HIV testing (e.g., every 3 to 6 months).
- **Anyone who has unsafe sex or shares injection drug equipment** should get tested for HIV at least once a year.

Everyone should know the facts on STDs and get tested! BEDHD offers low cost, confidential testing and treatment for chlamydia and gonorrhea, as well as HIV screening. BEDHD can prescribe treatment to clients who

test positive for chlamydia or gonorrhea for themselves and their partner(s). In addition to STD testing and treatment, BEDHD's Wear One program offers free condoms available at any of our partner locations. A list of pick up locations can be found at <https://www.barryeatonhealth.org/wear-one-campaign>. Residents can learn more about STDs at <http://www.cdc.gov/std/> or call BEDHD at (269) 798-4133 in Barry County or (517) 541-2630 in Eaton County.

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