



News Release

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State gonorrhea counts jump 34 percent through 2013

Several counties reporting outbreak levels

OLYMPIA — The number of gonorrhea cases in Washington is up substantially this year compared to 2012. There have been 3,137 cases through September 2013 compared to 2,350 during the same time in 2012. That's a 34 percent increase.

Rates have been going up steadily since 2010. Department of Health experts haven't been able to attribute a specific cause to the uptick. The jump has occurred among men and women in most age groups, but young adults remain the most affected. Rural and urban counties across Eastern and Western Washington have reported a climb in cases. However, several counties have seen more dramatic upswings, including Spokane, Yakima, Thurston, Kitsap and Benton counties, which are at outbreak levels.

Gonorrhea is the second most common sexually transmitted disease in Washington after chlamydia. It's spread through unprotected sex with an infected partner. The infection often has no symptoms, particularly among women. If symptoms are present, they may include discharge or painful urination. Serious long-term health issues can occur if the disease isn't treated, including pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility and an increased likelihood of HIV transmission.

The department continues to monitor case reports. Local public health officials are actively working with health care providers to ensure that people with gonorrhea and those exposed get appropriate testing and treatment to stop ongoing spread of the disease.

"We're working closely with local health agencies to actively monitor the rise in cases. We're especially concerned because of gonorrhea's resistance to antibiotics used to treat it," said Mark Aubin, sexually transmitted disease controller for the Department of Health. "It's important for

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us to assure every reported case is interviewed so the partners of infected people are identified and receive treatment.”

Despite the increase over the last couple years, Washington rates are still well below the national average.

Health officials urge anyone who is experiencing symptoms, or has a partner that has been diagnosed, to be tested. Routine screenings are recommended for sexually active people.

Prevention methods include consistent and correct use of condoms, partner treatment, mutual monogamy and abstinence.

The [Department of Health website](http://doh.wa.gov) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*.

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