Rates of sexually transmitted diseases continue to rise in Washington

OLYMPIA -- Newly released data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that the rate of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) continues to rise in Washington, and across the country.

Pregnant women experience some of the worst outcomes from untreated STDs, including from congenital syphilis, which is a growing problem in Washington. From 2014 to 2018, 23 cases of congenital syphilis were reported; this compares to only 13 cases reported from 1995 to 2013.

Rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis have all been rising over the last few years. Chlamydia is the most commonly reported STD; the rates are highest in 20 to 24-year-old women. At any age, if you think you may have been exposed to HIV or a STD, you and your sex partner(s) should visit a health clinic or your health care provider for testing and treatment.

Early detection and treatment can interrupt the steady climb of STD rates. The Department of Health is working with local public health agencies, community partners and medical care providers to enhance their capacity to diagnose, treat and prevent STDs in order to reduce the spread of these infections.

Data show sexually transmitted disease rates are higher among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. Health officials urge these people to talk to their medical provider about testing for syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia and HIV at least once a year.

Officials at the department are urging people who are sexually active to get tested and treated for HIV and STDs. HIV and STDs are still best prevented through consistent and correct condom use, reduction of the number of sex partners or monogamy and knowing the testing status of sex partners and choosing safer sex practices based on the partner’s status.

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For more information and answers to common questions about STDs, visit the Frequently Asked Questions page.

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