



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Health Officials Address Rising STD Rates. Encourage Public to Get Tested and Practice Safe Sex

SHASTA COUNTY – Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are on the rise in Shasta County, following a statewide trend. A [recent report](#) says California’s levels of recorded STDs are at the highest levels in 30 years.

STDs cause many serious health problems. If left untreated, chlamydia and gonorrhea may lead to infertility, ectopic pregnancy and chronic pelvic pain. Syphilis can cause serious health problems. Syphilis can affect the brain, nervous system, heart, eyes and other organs. It can also lead to vision or hearing loss, dementia, paralysis and even death.

From 2000 to 2012, there was an average of two cases of syphilis reported annually in Shasta County among men and women. In 2013, eight cases were reported. In 2018, the number jumped to 100 cases. Historically, most syphilis cases were among men, particularly men who had sex with men. Preliminary data from January 2019 through December 2019 show 148 cases, 59% of them are female.

The rise in cases among women ages 20-24 and 30-34 is of specific concern. A mom can pass syphilis to baby during pregnancy (congenital syphilis). It may cause miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, low birth weight or death shortly after birth. Babies who survive can develop cataracts, deafness, seizures or developmental delays. The good news is that syphilis is treatable with antibiotics during pregnancy. All pregnant women should get

tested for syphilis at least once during pregnancy. Additional testing is recommended in Shasta County due to the growing number of cases.

STDs are preventable by practicing safe sex. The bacterial STDs described above are treated with antibiotics. It is common for people with an STD to have no symptoms. Regular testing is important for diagnosis, treatment and prevention.

Shasta County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) is addressing the rise in cases. Two Disease Investigation Specialists and a Public Health Nurse follow up on syphilis cases. HHSA staff educates medical providers about STD symptoms that mimic other diseases and lead to misdiagnosis. HHSA also reminds providers to report suspected syphilis cases so that other people who may have been exposed are identified and can seek treatment.

The agency will also facilitate rapid syphilis testing in the jail and offer syphilis testing to high-risk clients and during outreach activities. The agency is also preparing a mobile clinic to reach the community.

Visit the HHSA [interactive presentation on syphilis rates](#). Or, visit the [Community Health Data](#) page for interactive story maps focusing on several health topics in Shasta County.

For more information on syphilis prevention and treatment, visit www.STD530.com.