



# **NEWS RELEASE**

## **St. Charles County Government**

**Department of Community Health and the Environment**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **RISKY BEHAVIORS MAY LEAD TO LONG-TERM LIFE CHANGES**

*Education, Prevention, & Testing Lessen Impact of Sexually Transmitted Diseases*

**St. Charles County, Missouri** – In June 1981, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published the first report on a disease that would later be known as HIV. Although a great deal of research and treatment improvements have occurred during the past 30 years, those infected continue to experience significant life changes and even deaths related to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

STDs are the most commonly reported infectious diseases in the United States, with chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis as the most common STDs. Chlamydia is caused by the bacterium, *Chlamydia trachomatis*, and is prevalent because the majority of infected people show no symptoms. If left untreated, patients with chlamydia can suffer pain and discomfort, damage reproductive organs, and lose the ability to conceive children. Gonorrhea is caused by *Neisseria gonorrhoeae*, which can grow and multiply easily in the warm, moist areas of the reproductive tract, and can also grow in the mouth, throat, eyes, and anus. As a result of contracting gonorrhea, sufferers will face pain and discomfort; damage to reproductive organs; the possibility of infertility; the potential for heart trouble, skin disease, blindness; and an increased risk for the transmission of HIV. Caused by the bacterium, *Treponema pallidum*, syphilis predominantly occurs in those ages 20-39 and is passed through vaginal, anal, and oral sex. Complications from syphilis include weight and hair loss, swollen glands, damage to body organs, blindness, paralysis, dementia, and death.

In addition to traditional passing through partner-to-partner contact, an infected mother can transmit STDs to her baby. Complications in fetuses and newborns can range from conjunctivitis (pink eye) and pneumonia to more serious issues like blindness, joint infections, and the possibility for stillborn or soon-after-birth deaths.

“Although education has done a tremendous job of raising awareness to the dangers of risky behaviors such as unprotected, uncommitted sexual relations, coupled with benefits from regular testing and reliable treatment, the CDC estimates that approximately 19 million new infections occur each year,” St. Charles County’s STD Prevention and Treatment Clinic Manager Marianne Adolf said. “Most people recognize that condom use is beneficial in preventing the transmission of STDs and pregnancy, but they may not understand that condoms do have a failure rate when not used correctly or consistently. In addition, condom usage does not fully protect against every STD — including ones that can impact a life forever.”

**(MORE)**

**(STD Prevention – continued)**

The most reliable way to avoid the spreading of STDs is to abstain from any sexual contact or to be in a long-term mutually monogamous relationship with an unaffected partner, but those who are sexually active can take steps to help prevent transmission. Studies have shown that using latex condoms (or polyurethane condoms if you're allergic to latex) will reduce the risk if used properly and consistently, although it must be understood that this is not 100% effective. In addition, discussing past relationships and behaviors will provide a better understanding of your partner.

The St. Charles County STD Prevention and Treatment clinic provides confidential testing on a sliding fee scale and educational counseling. Located within the Division of Public Health at 1650 Boone's Lick Road in St. Charles, the clinic is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Appointments are required and are scheduled by calling 636-949-7401.

The St. Charles County Department of Community Health and the Environment is committed to the protection and enhancement of health and the quality of life for all members of our community. For information on programs offered and to discover ways the Department assists our community, please visit [www.scchealth.org](http://www.scchealth.org) or call 636-949-7400.

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