



Press Release

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Syphilis listed as most Googled health issue in Illinois

Tips to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections, including gonorrhea and chlamydia

Syphilis, a sexually transmitted infection, is the most Googled health issue in Illinois this year, according to a June 27 Becker's Hospital Review article, "[The Most Googled Health Problems by State.](#)"

Sexually transmitted infections are a substantial health challenge facing the United States. The U.S. had more than [2 million reported cases of syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia in 2016.](#)

"People may be Googling syphilis, when it's more likely they have something else," said Cook County Department of Public Health Chief Operating Officer Dr. Terry Mason, MD. "STIs can masquerade as other things. You won't know what you have until you get tested."

"We are also very concerned about chlamydia and gonorrhea rates; especially among 15 to 24 year olds," said Mason. "In suburban Cook County (SCC), the rate of chlamydia is 55 times higher than the syphilis rate, and the rate of gonorrhea is 13 times higher than the syphilis rate."

Chlamydia is the most frequently reported infectious disease in the U.S. In 2016, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC), the chlamydia rates (per 100,000) were 497 nationally. They were 562 in [Illinois](#), and 461.1 in [SCC](#).

Gonorrhea is the second most frequently reported infectious disease in the U.S. According to the [CDC](#), Cook County (including the City of Chicago and suburban Cook County) gonorrhea rates were the second highest among cities and counties in the U.S., with 11,082 gonorrhea cases and a rate of 211.2 per 100,000 in 2015. In 2016, gonorrhea rates (per 100,000) were 146 nationally, 165 in Illinois, and 112.7 in SCC.

"To make things worse, we are down to one class of recommended antibiotics to treat gonorrhea," said Mason. "Drug-resistant strains of gonorrhea are increasing. That is why prevention is more critical now than ever before."

How to Prevent the Spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

"To reduce the number of STI cases, we all need to work together – health departments, health care providers, and everyone who is sexually active," said Mason. "Don't guess. Get a test."

Anyone who is sexually active can get STIs. CCDPH urges residents to:

- GET TESTED – Most STIs do not have symptoms. [Find a testing site near you.](#)
- GET TREATED – Chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis can be treated with the right doses of the right antibiotics. Your provider may be able to give you medications to give your partner as well.
- USE CONDOMS – Use condoms the right way every time you have oral, anal or vaginal sex including hookups arranged through an app. [Request condoms from CCDPH online.](#)
- CALL CCDPH – Call 708-836-8637 if you need help notifying partners. If you receive a call from the health department, answer or return the call in case a partner is trying to notify you of an STI.

Health care providers play a critical role in reducing STIs in SCC as well. Visit the CCDPH website for [healthcare provider toolkits](#) with reporting requirements, staging and treatment algorithms, and information for patients. For STI information, visit <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/sexual-health>, and follow CCDPH on Twitter @STIHIVCookCo.

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