

Press release: New data reveals 420,000 cases of STIs diagnosed in 2017

The increase in syphilis follows a 10-year trend, with 78% of diagnoses in gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM). Public Health England (PHE) is working with partner organisations to develop an action plan to address this rise. The plan aims to increase numbers and frequency of tests in populations at higher risk of infection, to promote early detection and treatment.

Across all sexually transmitted infections (STI), the highest rates of diagnoses continue to be seen in 16 to 24 year olds. It is important to increase condom use and encourage testing following changes in partners, in order to drive down the transmission of infections. This is why PHE launched Protect Against STIs in December 2017 – a sexual health campaign aimed at promoting condom use in this important demographic.

Dr Gwenda Hughes, Consultant Scientist and Head of Sexually Transmitted Infection Section at PHE, said:

Sexually transmitted infections pose serious consequences to health – both your own and that of your current and future sexual partners. The impact of STIs can be considerable, with some causing infertility, pelvic inflammatory disease and harm to unborn babies.

Consistent and correct condom use with new and casual partners is the best defence against STIs, and if you are at risk, regular check-ups are essential to enable early diagnosis and treatment.

Other data published in the report show a fall in rates of genital warts, reflecting the widespread uptake of the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine in girls aged 12 to 13. The report also indicates an 8% decline in chlamydia testing and 2% drop in chlamydia diagnoses in 15 to 24 year olds. However, there was a 22% rise in cases of gonorrhoea in 2017 compared to 2016.

Those at risk of STIs can access services through sexual health or genitourinary medicine clinics. PHE recommend regular HIV and STI testing for those with new or casual partners. MSM who are having condomless sex with new or casual partners should seek testing every 3 months. Local STI services can be located online via [NHS Choices](#).

Important statistics:

In 2017, there were approximately 422,000 diagnoses of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) made in England, around the same number that was reported

in 2016.

There were 7,137 diagnoses of syphilis reported in 2017, a 20% increase (from 5,955) relative to the year prior and a 148% increase relative to 2008.

There were 44,676 diagnoses of gonorrhoea reported in 2017, a 22% increase (from 36,577) relative to the year prior.

There were 441 diagnoses of first episode genital warts in 15 to 17 year old girls in 2017, a 90% decrease relative to 2009 and an early expression of the success of the national HPV immunisation programme.

Over 1.3 million chlamydia tests were carried out and over 126,000 chlamydia diagnoses were made among young people aged 15 to 24 years. There was an 8% decline in the number of chlamydia tests in 2017 compared to 2016.

The impact of STIs remains greatest in young heterosexuals 15 to 24 years; black ethnic minorities; and gay, bisexual and other MSM.

Background

1. Read the [full report and breakdown of data](#).
2. To support sexual health services and work to reduce STI transmission in communities PHE:
 - launched a sexual health campaign in December 2017, called Protect Against STIs, which targets 16 to 24 year olds to promote condom usage as they experience the highest STI diagnosis rates
 - provide Local Authorities with data on local service activity – including clinical attendance, testing rates, and epidemiology (whether STIs are increasing or decreasing at a low level) – and an epidemiology report at the end of each year providing key information for commissioners
 - is developing a syphilis action plan to address the increase in cases
3. Find out more about the signs and symptoms of STIs on [NHS Choices](#) or [Sexwise](#).

Public Health England press office

Email

phe-pressoffice@phe.gov.uk

Telephone

020 7654 8400

Out of hours telephone

020 8200 4400