



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Dave A. Chokshi, MD MSc
Commissioner

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT REPORTS AN INCREASE IN SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS IN NEW YORK CITY FROM 2019 TO 2020

Primary and secondary syphilis diagnoses increased among both men and women; gonorrhea diagnoses increased among women from 2019 to 2020

New Yorkers should reengage with routine testing for STIs

October 13, 2021 – The Health Department today released preliminary data on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in 2019 and 2020 in New York City. According to the [New York City STI Surveillance Data Report](#), from 2019 to 2020, rates of primary and secondary (P&S) syphilis – the stages during which syphilis is most infectious – increased 9% for men and 24% for women, rates of gonorrhea increased 5% for women and decreased 19% for men, and chlamydia rates decreased 29% for men and 23% for women during the same time period. While preliminary and subject to change, data from early 2021 indicate that numbers of reported STIs are rebounding to levels observed in 2019, though chlamydia cases remain much lower. As the city continues to reopen and health care services become more accessible, the Health Department urges New Yorkers to reengage with routine testing for STIs, including HIV and other sexual health care services.

“We know that sexually transmitted infection (STI) transmission has continued throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency, however many New Yorkers did not seek routine testing last year,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “STIs can cause long-lasting harm and I encourage New Yorkers to speak with their health care providers about sexual health services. New Yorkers can also visit one of the Health Department’s Sexual Health Clinics around the city.”

Earlier this summer, Health Department researchers published an [analysis](#) of HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and P&S syphilis surveillance data in New York City to describe trends in diagnosis and reporting surrounding the New York State PAUSE order during the COVID-19 public health emergency in spring 2020. There were substantially fewer positive test reports of HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and P&S syphilis during New York State PAUSE (from March 23, 2020, to June 7, 2020). As restrictions were lifted, numbers gradually rebounded, and by July 2020, positive test reports for HIV and gonorrhea nearly approximated July 2019 levels and reports for chlamydia and syphilis exceeded July 2019 levels. Multiple factors contributed to the decrease: many New Yorkers may have experienced changes in their sexual partnerships or networks because of COVID-19 (e.g., less sex with people outside of their household or primary

partnerships) or may have been less likely to get tested for STIs due to reduced availability of health care services or messaging that New Yorkers should seek health care services only for the most critical or acute needs.

Chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis are common and curable, however, if left untreated, there can be lasting health effects including infertility and chronic pelvic pain. Syphilis can cause visual and hearing loss, dementia, and paralysis. When a pregnant person has syphilis, the infection can pass to the fetus (congenital syphilis) causing miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth, low birth weight, or death after birth. Having an STI can also make it easier to get or transmit HIV. You can help prevent STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis by using condoms during sex. Most STIs have no signs or symptoms early on, so it is important to get tested and treated.

The Health Department's Sexual Health Clinics offer low- to no-cost walk-in sexual health services for people 12 years and older, regardless of immigration status. No parental consent is necessary. Services include STI testing and treatment; HIV testing, treatment initiation, and prevention, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and emergency post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP); contraception, including emergency contraception; condoms; naloxone; and behavioral health counseling. Select [Sexual Health Clinics](#) are currently open and telemedicine services are also available through the NYC Sexual Health Clinic Hotline at 347-396-7959, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information on the Sexual Health Clinics, including services, locations, and hours of operation, visit nyc.gov/health/clinics.

Free condoms and other safer sex products are available at distribution sites citywide. To find a site near you, visit the [NYC Health Map](#) and select "Free Safer Sex Products." New Yorkers can order safer sex products for home delivery through our Door 2 Door program by visiting nyc.gov/health and searching for "condoms." Free HIV self-tests are also available for delivery by visiting the [NYC Health Map](#) and selecting "Sexual Health Services" and then "HIV Testing."

The Health Department maintains online directories of providers currently offering sexual and reproductive health services in the [Bronx](#), [Brooklyn](#), [Manhattan](#), [Queens](#), and [Staten Island](#), and PlaySure Network providers offering [HIV and STI testing, PrEP, emergency PEP, and HIV care services in clinics](#) and [HIV-related navigation and supportive services in community-based settings](#).

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