



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DHMH Recognizes April as STD Awareness Month *Free Webinar for Health Professionals - Wednesday, April 18*

Baltimore, MD (April 18, 2011) - During the month of April, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) will join federal, state, and local partners nationwide in the observance of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) Awareness Month. DHMH will partner with healthcare providers throughout the State and regional federal health agencies to ensure that clinicians have the latest information on diagnosing, treating, and preventing sexually transmitted infections in Maryland.

"Sexually transmitted infections remain a serious public health concern in Maryland," said DHMH Secretary Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D. "Marylanders should take appropriate steps to protect themselves and their loved ones. Health care providers should encourage all patients 13 years and older to get tested for STIs."

To help combat the spread of STDs, DHMH is collaborating with the MidAtlantic Public Health Training Center at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the STD/HIV Prevention Training Center at Johns Hopkins to present our Third Annual STD Awareness Month live webinar. This year's event, "*Sexual and Reproductive Health Care, What About the Young Male?*" will take place on Wednesday, April 18, from noon to 1:30 pm. Participants will receive free continuing education credits through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Health professionals interested in joining the webinar can log on at www.jhsph.edu/maphtc. This webinar will be archived for two years on the MidAtlantic Public Health Training Center's website.

"We encourage health care providers to discuss sexual health issues with their patients, and provide sexually transmitted infection screening and treatment when needed," said Heather Hauck, Director of DHMH's Infectious Disease and Environmental Health Administration. "If patients and their sexual partners get proper medical treatment, they may avoid transmitting infections to others and developing life-long complications."

In Maryland, infection rates for sexually transmitted infections, including syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia, is consistently higher than the national average. Youth and young adults bear the biggest burden of gonorrhea and chlamydia, which disproportionately affect

15 to 24 year olds nationwide and in Maryland. In 2010, 74 percent of chlamydia and 64 percent of gonorrhea cases were in this age group. They were the first and second most frequently reported infectious diseases statewide. Across Maryland, sexually transmitted infections also disproportionately affect females, people of color, and men who have sex with men. Local health departments around the State provide free STD testing and treatment.

According to the CDC, Maryland ranked 7th in the U.S. in 2010 for syphilis, with 5.9 cases reported per 100,000 population, compared to the U.S. rate of 4.5. Maryland ranked 14th in the U.S. for Chlamydia, with 459.6 cases per 100,000 population, compared to the national rate of 426. Maryland has also seen an increase in the number of gonorrhea cases, especially troubling because gonorrhea is becoming increasingly resistant to antibiotics. During 2010, Maryland ranked 11th in the U.S. for gonorrhea, with 7,413 Marylanders diagnosed with gonorrhea - a 16 percent increase from 2009.

To learn more about STIs in Maryland or to find a testing site near you, please go to <http://ideha.dhmh.maryland.gov/OIDPCS/CSTIP/> or call 410-767-6690.

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