



Todd H. Stroger • President
Cook County Board of Commissioners

Warren L. Batts • Chairman
Cook County Health & Hospitals System

Jorge Ramirez • Vice-Chairman
Cook County Health & Hospitals System

William T. Foley • CEO
Cook County Health & Hospitals System

Health System Board Members

Dr. David A. Ansell
Commissioner Jerry Butler
David N. Carvalho
Quin R. Golden
Benn Greenspan
Sr. Sheila Lyne
Dr. Luis R. Muñoz
Heather E. O'Donnell
Andrea L. Zopp

1010 West Lake Street, Suite 300
Oak Park, Illinois 60301
(708) 492-2000
TDD (708) 492-2002

Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., MPH
Chief Operating Officer

For Immediate Release: June 9, 2010

Contact: Amy Poore 708-492-2015

Public Health officials report an increase in rates of syphilis.

Education, prevention and screening vital to curtailing the increasing rates in suburban Cook County (SCC)

Syphilis is a curable, bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI). According to communicable disease control data released by the Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH), in SCC, rates of primary and secondary syphilis infections have been increasing since 2003. Individuals between the ages of 20-24 have the highest incidence rate of primary and secondary syphilis cases.

“Many individuals think syphilis is a disease of the past; however, it still exists and the rates are increasing in suburban Cook County,” said CCDPH chief operating officer Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., M.P.H. “Our adolescent population clearly needs better health education including how to prevent STIs and when to get tested if they are at risk.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), comprehensive sex education effectively reduces risky sexual behavior, increases condom use and decreases the spread of STIs. Providing our young people with medically accurate, comprehensive sex education in school should be a vital part of methods implemented to prevent the spread of syphilis and other STIs.

Symptoms of syphilis include a single painless sore in the genital area. The infection is passed from person to person during vaginal, anal or oral sex through direct contact with the sore. Having a syphilis sore can also increase a person's risk of becoming infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Pregnant women can also infect their unborn fetus -- an extremely serious, sometimes fatal condition called congenital syphilis.

Other key findings of the report include an increased rate of infection among non-Hispanic blacks, who make up only 13.5% of the population in SCC, but account for over 60% of the primary and secondary cases. In addition, the data indicates that residents in the South District are more heavily burdened with syphilis than the other districts in SCC.

To view the reported data and for more information about syphilis and other sexually transmitted infections, please visit www.cookcountypublichealth.org, or call CCDPH at 708-492-2000.

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

###