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Press Release

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Take Charge of Your Sexual Health: Get Tested Young people encouraged to get tested for STDs

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY - April is sexually transmitted disease (STD) awareness month. STD prevention and testing are critical to overall health.

STD Awareness Month is not just about awareness but also about action. Local health officials urge everyone who is sexually active, especially young people, to take charge of their sexual health and get tested. Young people and men who have sex with men are at particular risk and should get tested more often.

STD testing is now more crucial than ever because rates continue to rise in Santa Cruz County and statewide. Rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis continue to grow, and syphilis has re-emerged as a significant public health concern. Still, all STDs can be prevented and treated, and most can be cured.

“It is important for your health care provider to know what types of sex you have. This will help them choose the tests and care that are best for you,” said Paula Haller, Santa Cruz County STD Controller. “Many people don’t know they have an STD because they often don’t have signs or symptoms. However, if left untreated, some STDs can cause serious health problems and can make it easier to contract HIV.”

National statistics estimate that one out of every two young people will have an STD before age 25. Chlamydia is the most common reportable STD in California. In Santa Cruz County, between 2014 and 2018, reported cases of chlamydia increased from 911 cases to 1246 cases per year.

STD testing is covered by private medical insurance, Medi-Cal, and Family Planning Access Care and Treatment (PACT). You can access testing from your primary provider or a low-cost clinic. For those who don’t have a provider or health insurance, visit the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency’s website to learn more about testing options (www.santacruzhealth.org/SEX).

Teenagers automatically qualify for free confidential coverage through Family PACT and do not need parent or guardian permission to use Family PACT. More information can be found at www.familypact.org. According to California state law, teens do not need parent or guardian permission for STD testing; and schools are required to excuse teens for sexual health care visits without notifying parents or guardians.

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