

Jackson County Department of Public Health

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JCDPH HIGHLIGHTS HEALTH IMPACTS OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES DURING STD AWARENESS MONTH

Nearly 20 million new sexually transmitted infections occur in the United States every year costing the American healthcare system nearly \$16 billion in direct medical costs alone, says a report by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. America's youth shoulder a substantial burden of these infections. The CDC estimates that half of all new STDs in the country occur among young men and women aged 15 to 24. The high incidence of STDs in the general population suggests that many Americans are at risk of exposure to STDs, underscoring the need for prevention.

Despite this news, there are effective ways to prevent, diagnose, and treat STDs. STD screening and early diagnoses are essential in preventing transmission and the long term health consequences of STDs. The Jackson County Department of Public Health (JCDPH) provides confidential counseling and testing for STDs. Services include a risk assessment, physical exam, and appropriate lab work for a variety of diseases such as HIV and syphilis. Parental permission is not required for these services; most services are free of charge.

Abstaining from sex, reducing the number of sexual partners, and consistently and correctly using condoms are all effective prevention strategies. Safe, effective vaccines are also available to prevent hepatitis B and some types of the human papillomavirus (HPV) that causes disease and cancer. And for all individuals who are sexually active—particularly young people—STD screening and prompt treatment (if infected) are critical to protect a person's health and prevent transmission to others.

For questions about screening, treatment, or the availability of vaccines, call JCDPH at 828-587-8289 or visit <http://health.jacksonnc.org/sexual-health>.

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