



HEALTH ADVISORY

MARCH 28, 2006

INCREASING GONORRHEA AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN HETEROSEXUALS IN SAN FRANCISCO

In 2005, reflecting an increase seen throughout the Western United States, gonorrhea in San Francisco increased 11% overall (from 2,174 cases to 2,420 cases) and 51% among women (from 234 cases to 353 cases). Though there was a substantial increase among women of all races, African American women had the largest increase (69% from 93 cases to 157 cases) and have a rate of gonorrhea 12 times greater than white women (485.3 per 100,000 compared with 39.5 per 100,000). In addition, recent gonorrhea increases have been particularly apparent among young African Americans aged 15–19 years. In this group there were 45 more cases of gonorrhea in 2005 than in 2004; an increase of more than 100%.

Because of this dramatic increase in gonorrhea among African American youth, we are alerting clinicians and request that they follow these recommendations.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF ALL CLINICIANS:

1. **Assess** sexual activity in all patients under 25 years old
2. **Screen** sexually active African American young persons under 25 years for gonorrhea and chlamydia*
3. **Treat** all cases and their sex partners within 7 days
4. **Re-test** all cases 3 months after diagnosis

* All sexually active women younger than 25 years should be screened for chlamydia

This Health Advisory and additional information, including information on expedited partner therapy, is posted on the SFPD City Clinic website (sfcityclinic.org/providers) under General STD Management Guidelines.

Gonorrhea puts women at increased risk for infertility, pelvic inflammatory disease, chronic pelvic pain, and ectopic pregnancy (a surgical emergency). Gonorrhea puts men and women at increased risk for HIV. Most women have mild or no symptoms of gonorrhea, and often do not know they are infected. Despite recent increases, gonorrhea is uncommon in most populations of women in San Francisco except black women. Note that all sexually active women younger than 25 years should be screened for chlamydia. Chlamydia is much more common among all populations of women. The San Francisco Department of Public Health/ STD Prevention and Control Services is extremely concerned about this increase in gonorrhea and is interviewing young heterosexuals with gonorrhea to identify risk factors contributing to these recent increases.

Prevention:

Individuals can decrease their risk for acquiring gonorrhea by using condoms and being screened and treated for STDs.

Categories of urgency levels

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident of situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action