

**INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE**

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**National STD Program**

Information about  
School-Based  
Chlamydia Screening  
Projects in Indian Country

*Developed in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,  
National Center for HIV/AIDS, STDs & TB Prevention,  
Division of STD Prevention*

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**WELCOME - Parents, Teachers, Principals, School Board Members,  
and others who are involved in keeping our youth healthy!**

## **School-Based Chlamydia Screening Project**

### **Goal:**

The goal of this project is to help tribes and communities throughout Indian Country address high chlamydia rates among youth. This can only be accomplished with your support. In order to implement a successful screening effort, we need your help to encourage all youth to participate in this important and easy health screening.

### **Why Screen for Chlamydia?**

In 2005, chlamydia was the most commonly reported infectious disease in the U.S., and most cases were in adolescents and young adults.<sup>1</sup> Despite this common occurrence, teens who seek medical care are unlikely to be screened for chlamydia. A recent national survey of high school students found that only 43% of females and 26% of males who had a health care visit in the past 12 months even discussed STDs or pregnancy with the provider.<sup>2</sup>

Most women (and many men) experience no signs or symptoms when infected with chlamydia, so most cases are not diagnosed and properly treated. This means that the true number of people infected with chlamydia is probably much higher than indicated by current reports — perhaps as high as 3 million new cases each year.<sup>3</sup>

The long-term health consequences of undiagnosed chlamydia are serious, particularly for women. Untreated chlamydia can lead to chronic pelvic pain, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), ectopic pregnancy, infertility, and increased risk for HIV infection.

Fortunately, chlamydia can be easily detected using urine screening tests, and can be treated quickly and effectively with antibiotics.

To address the high rates of chlamydia in adolescents and the serious complications of untreated disease in women, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and several other national organizations recommend that *all sexually active women age 25 years or younger be screened annually for chlamydia.*

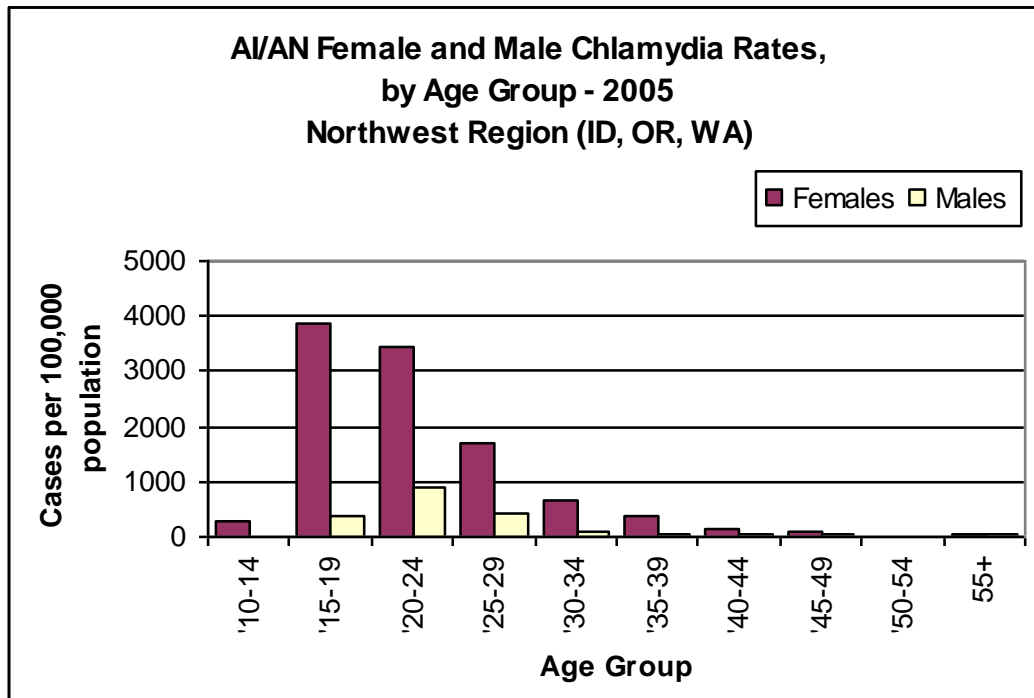
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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance, 2005 Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, November 2006. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats/default.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Burstein GR, Lowry R, Klein HD and Santelli JS. 2001. Primary care preventive care visits and sexually transmitted disease and pregnancy prevention services received by U.S. high school students. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2:127.

<sup>3</sup> Cates W, et al. 1999. Estimates of the incidence and prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases in the United States. *Sexually Transmitted Diseases* 26 (suppl): S2-S7.

## Local Chlamydia Data:



NW = Oregon, Washington, and Idaho

Most chlamydia cases diagnosed in the U.S. occur among young people between the ages of 15 and 29. Because of their anatomy, girls are more likely than boys to become infected when exposed to chlamydia. Girls are also more likely to be tested, because of the serious health consequences for women.

In the Northwest, over eight-hundred American Indian and Alaska Native youths age 10-24 years were diagnosed with chlamydia in 2005. Over half of these cases occurred among 15-19 year olds. Because chlamydia often causes no signs or symptoms, it is likely that many more cases occurred without being diagnosed.

If each of these chlamydia cases were to go untreated, approximately 275 of the girls would go on to develop pelvic inflammatory disease as a result of their infection, which can cause pain and permanent scarring in the uterus and fallopian tubes. As a result, over fifty of these girls would not be able to have children when they chose to start a family.

For their health now and in the future, it is vitally important that sexually active teens be screened annually for chlamydia.

## What are the Benefits of School-Based Screening?

### Benefits for Students:

All students — those who are sexually active and not yet sexually active — will learn about STDs and how to prevent them, will learn how to prevent chlamydia (for themselves and their partners), and will hopefully take steps in the future to reduce their risk and access appropriate screening. Linking students to other services such as primary care, mental health, pregnancy prevention, and substance abuse services can be another selling point.

Moreover, teens that have chlamydia and find out through a school-based screening project will benefit because their infection will be detected and treated. They will avoid the most serious health consequences, and will prevent transmission to partners.

### Benefits for Schools:

We all know that time in school is limited. The short amount of time that teachers have with students is valuable; however, so is student health and well-being. A school-based chlamydia screening offers many potential benefits to students, teachers, the school, and the community at-large. As parents and teachers, you will have an opportunity to be a positive influence in this area of your students' lives and can provide important health services that are currently lacking.

Because class time is scarce, the screening can easily be conducted at other times, such as during home room or after school. To enhance this learning experience, teachers can make connections to various realms of academic content. Using examples from science, math, health, or history will increase the students' understanding of chlamydia and other STDs.

In order to minimize the burden to your classrooms and school, we will ensure that this screening is well organized and is an efficient use of your time and energy. Project Red Talon (at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board) will offer all necessary materials such as consent forms and informational materials for students and parents. A local contact person will be available to answer any questions you may have.

Lack of time and resource limits the services that a school can provide. This chlamydia screening is just one way that we can help fill the gap and offer much-needed services that students need and want. When you offer this service at your school or in another community setting, you can meet a well-documented need, while minimizing the burden on your already stretched resources.

## Benefits for Communities:

As part of the broader community, schools can have a significant influence beyond the students themselves. For example, because chlamydia disproportionately affects young people, a school-based screening project has the potential to significantly reduce overall infection rates in your community.

By garnering the support of adults connected to the school, such as administrators, board members, parents, teachers, and the media, a school-based project can educate not only the students, but the entire community as well.

Communities are always hungry for good news. This school-based chlamydia screening project can be at the center of a real success story — one that involves strong collaboration among schools and tribes, engages the entire school community, and, most importantly, shows results by effectively reducing chlamydia rates in your community.

## Striving for Balance:

The Circle of Life and maintaining balance in one's life are two very important concepts in Native American teachings and culture. It is important to strive for and maintain balance in all that we do — spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally.



Yet in a school setting, the emphasis is often on academic mental activities only, which can result in imbalance. It's important to recognize that a school can also address the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of our student's lives. Offering school-based screening and health services is one way to respond to the needs of our youth in a more holistic way.

## Frequently Asked Questions about School-Based STD Screening Projects

### What is School-Based Screening about?

The school-based screening project is designed to educate students about sexually transmitted diseases (STD), and to provide them with confidential STD testing, diagnosis, and treatment.

### Why is it important?

- Nearly 4 million teenagers get a sexually transmitted disease (STD) each year. Chlamydia is the most common STD among teens.
- The **majority** of young people who have chlamydia have **no** signs or symptoms and do not know they are infected.
- Untreated chlamydia can cause permanent damage to the reproductive organs.
- Chlamydia is caused by bacteria and is easily treated with antibiotics. But teens need to know that they are infected in order to seek and receive treatment.

### Why test in the schools?

STDs are rising across the nation, and our young people are most at risk. In order to combat this trend, testing needs to be available to everyone, and treatment needs to be free and confidential.

Schools are the best way to reach young people with testing and information concerning disease prevention. School-based screening has been very successful throughout the U.S. (Baltimore, New Orleans, Philadelphia and San Francisco), and is now being used by a number of tribes to reduce the spread and complications of STDs in this young population. Abstinence will be identified as the best method to prevent STDs.

### What does the project provide?

- **Presentations about STDs:** includes common types, how you get them, testing, treatment and prevention for students, school staff, and parents.
- **Risk Assessment and Individual Counseling:** to help students understand their risk for STD and make a plan to protect themselves.

- **Free On-site Chlamydia Testing:** provided for all students at the school. The test is painless and private. Students provide a urine sample, which is sent to a lab for testing. Results are back in 10 days, and students are notified directly and confidentially.
- **Treatment and Medical Referrals:** for any students testing positive for chlamydia.
- **Incentives and Rewards:** raffle movie tickets, gift certificates, or novelty items to encourage participation in the screening project.
- **Health Education Materials:** provided fact sheets and posters about STDs.
- **Training for School Staff and Peer Educators:** on STD risk assessment and counseling skills.
- **Special Activities:** such as tours of local health clinics to encourage students to access care and discuss careers in the health field with medical professionals.

### **Who will do the testing?**

The Tribal Health Clinic in cooperation with the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board and the State Department of Health. All testing will be done confidentially. Tribal Health Clinic staff will provide an educational presentation about STDs and this project prior to testing.

### **What does the school need to provide?**

All project materials are provided at no cost to schools. The school will need to:

- Appoint a contact person for the project.
- Designate an area for the screening, such as a classroom located near a restroom.
- Set up a confidential room for counseling and discussing results.
- Secure parental consent.

### **What about parental consent?**

Depending on the age of the student and the state where the screening occurs, students in many states are eligible to receive confidential STD testing without the consent of a parent. In other states, parents must sign a consent form for students to participate in the project.

This project will work with our local schools and parents to decide what approach would be best for this community. Project staff will need to be informed of any students who are excluded from receiving services or sensitive materials.



### **Who will be tested?**

To help ensure confidentiality, all students in grades 9-12 will have the opportunity to participate on a **voluntary** basis, regardless of their sexual experience. Even students who are sexually abstinent will benefit from the information given.

No physical examination is needed, just a small sample of urine. The urine will be tested for gonorrhea and chlamydia, the two most common infections among teens. Many students do not know about or are misinformed about chlamydia and other STDs. Most infected students are not aware of the infection and have no symptoms. Students who do not wish to be tested will not be required to provide a urine sample. Specimens will not be tested for pregnancy or drugs.

### **What if the Chlamydia test is positive?**

These diseases can be cured with antibiotics (medicine). Most students can be treated with a single dose of oral medication. If the students do not re-expose themselves to the STD, they will no longer have the infection in their body. In order to combat the spread of STDs and protect students from medical complications, all students who test positive will need to be treated. These students will receive free, confidential treatment in the school approximately one week after testing. Students will be counseled to reduce their risk for re-infection, and will be referred for follow-up if necessary.

### **What happens if screening is not done or if treatment is not administered?**

The consequences of undetected or untreated infections are serious. Complications can include infertility, pelvic inflammatory disease, and tubal pregnancy in women, and testicle pain in men.

# Chlamydia Fact Sheet

Chlamydia (kluh-mih-dee-uh) is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by a type of bacteria or germ.

## How Do People Get It?

- You can get it by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex.
- It can also be spread to the eyes by touching them with fluids from the vagina or penis.
- An infected mother can also give it to her baby during childbirth. Babies can get eye or lung infections during birth.

## What Are the Symptoms?

About 75% of women and 50% of men with chlamydia have **no** signs or symptoms.

- If symptoms show up, they happen 1 to 4 weeks after having sex.
- A person is still infected and can pass it on even after symptoms go away.
- If signs do appear, here's what to look for:

### Men

- ✓ Discharge (drip) from the penis, or stained underwear
- ✓ Burning or pain when urinating (peeing)
- ✓ Pain or itching around the head of the penis
- ✓ Urinating more often
- ✓ Swollen, tender testicles

### Women

- ✓ Discharge from the vagina
- ✓ Burning or pain when urinating (peeing)
- ✓ Pain and itching of the vulva or vagina
- ✓ Pain or cramps in the abdomen (lower belly)
- ✓ Bleeding between periods or after having sex
- ✓ Pain when having sex

## Is It Serious?

- Yes. If you don't get treated, it can cause permanent damage to the reproductive organs.
- Chlamydia can make some women and men unable to have children.

## How Do You Know if You Have It?

- You have to be tested for it. The test is painless. It is a simple urine test.
- Any person who is sexually active should be tested for chlamydia and other STDs.

## How Is It Treated?

- Chlamydia is treated with antibiotics.
- It's important to take all the medicine because chlamydia can come back if you don't.
- Also, avoid having sex for a full week after treatment.

## What About Your Partner?

Your sex partner needs to be tested and treated too. He or she could give chlamydia to someone else or back to you.

## How Do You Keep from Getting It?

- **Don't have sex.** Not having sex is the best protection against chlamydia and other STDs. People can choose not to have sex even if they've had sex in the past.
- **Use latex condoms every time.**
- **Plan ahead.** Before you have sex:
  - Talk to your partner about STDs.
  - Get an STD checkup and be sure your partner does too.
  - Talk to your partner about protection.
- **Don't use drugs or alcohol.** They affect your ability to make smart and safe decisions about sex.