

**April 3, 2018**

## **MCHD highlights health impacts during STD Awareness Month**

MOBILE, Alabama — April is STD Awareness Month, an annual observance to raise public awareness about the impact of sexually transmitted diseases on the lives of Americans and the importance of preventing, testing for, and treating STDs. It is an opportunity to normalize routine STD testing and conversations about sexual health.

Nearly 20 million new sexually transmitted infections (STIs; when people are infected but may not have the infection show symptoms or turn into a disease) 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 U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). America's youth shoulder a substantial burden of these infections. CDC estimates that half of all new STDs in the country occur among young men and women aged 15 to 24.

“The 2018 STD Awareness theme – ‘Treat Me Right’ – is designed to open the lines of communication associated with sexual health matters,” said Johnndra Lewis, M.P.A., who oversees the Mobile County Health Department’s STD Surveillance & Control division. “MCHD’s 21-Day STD Awareness Campaign appearing on Facebook will empower patients to discuss concerns with their providers and reconnect medical professionals with the recommended CDC guidelines for testing and treatment.

“I believe this year’s vision fosters the ideal relationship between providers and patients for which the best care plan is facilitated.”

The high incidence of STIs 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. Screening and early diagnosis are essential in preventing transmission and the long term health consequences of STDs.

During this month, MCHD’s Disease Intervention Specialists will offer testing to students at the University of South Alabama, promote safer sex practices/prevention at Mobile’s Gay Pride Festival, and provide educational opportunities within the community.

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 cause disease and cancer. And for all individuals who are sexually active – particularly young people – STI screening and prompt treatment (if infected) are critical to protect a person’s health and prevent transmission to others.

You may visit <http://mchd.org/General/default.aspx?type=InfectiousDiseaseClinic&index=17> for more information, as well as [www.cdc.gov/std](http://www.cdc.gov/std).