

## INFECTION

# STD rates hit a record high in U.S.

**By Lena H. Sun**  
Of *The Washington Post*

Infections from three sexually transmitted diseases have hit another record high, federal health officials reported.

More than 1.5 million cases of chlamydia were reported last year, up 6 percent from the year before. About 400,000 cases of gonorrhea were reported, a nearly 13 percent increase from 2014. The biggest increase, 19 percent, occurred in syphilis cases, with nearly 24,000 reported, according to the annual report on STDs released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

All three diseases are curable with antibiotics, but gonorrhea is growing increasingly resistant to treatment with antibiotics.

CDC officials said STD rates are rising at a time when many of the country's systems for preventing those infections have eroded. In recent years, more than half of state and local STD programs have had their budgets cut, resulting in more than 20 health department STD clinics closing in one year alone, the CDC said. In 2014, the number of chlamydia cases also rose to record levels.

"We have reached a decisive moment for the nation," said Jonathan Mermin, director of CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis,

STD and TB Prevention.

Most STD cases continue to go undiagnosed and untreated, putting people at risk for severe and often irreversible health consequences, the CDC said. The economic burden to the U.S. health-care system is nearly \$16 billion a year, according to the CDC.

Young people and gay and bisexual men face the greatest risk of infection, and there continues to be a troubling increase in syphilis among newborns, who are infected by their mothers.

The 2015 data, the latest available, show:

- Americans ages 15 to 24 accounted for nearly two-thirds of chlamydia diagnoses and half of gonorrhea diagnoses.

- Men who have sex with men accounted for the majority of new gonorrhea cases and the most contagious forms of syphilis.

- Women's rate of syphilis diagnosis increased by more than 27 percent from 2014 to 2015.

- Congenital syphilis, which occurs when the infection is transmitted from a pregnant woman to her baby, increased by 6 percent.

Officials urged health-care providers to make STD screening a standard part of medical care, especially in pregnant women. Individuals need to get tested regularly and reduce risk by using condoms.