



COUNTY OF POLK

Health Department

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Polk County Health Department News Release

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Gonorrhea becoming resistant to antibiotics

The most common sexually transmitted diseases in Polk County are gonorrhea and Chlamydia and both are usually treated easily with antibiotics. However, gonorrhea has been developing a resistance to antibiotics and doctors are now left with one antibiotic treatment option, an option that has also showed signs of resistance. If left untreated, gonorrhea can cause pelvic inflammation, severe pregnancy complications and female infertility.

Mr. Kozin said “Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted disease that until recently has been easily treated with antibiotics. Resistance to commonly used antibiotics to cure the infection was detected several years ago in Japan and has spread to Europe and now North America.”

The Polk County Health Department tracks and investigates all cases of HIV, syphilis, Chlamydia and gonorrhea in order to ensure individuals who may have been exposed are treated in an effort to reduce the spread. Some STDs, such herpes and genital warts (HPV) cannot be cured but others, such as Chlamydia, syphilis and gonorrhea are still treatable but possibly not for long.

“Most sexually transmitted diseases can be prevented by practicing safe sex, which includes using a condom every time, limiting the number of partners you have, and knowing who your partners are. If left untreated STDs can be passed to others and can cause permanent health problems, such as infertility, dementia and even early death,” said Rick Kozin, Polk County Health Department Director.

Many STDs have no signs or symptoms so anyone who is sexually active should be tested at least once a year for STDs. Some people, like men who have sex with men, should be tested more frequently. Many people, especially teens and young adults, do not practice safe sex consistently. Public health professionals know that with high numbers of diseases, like Chlamydia, it only takes one time having sex without a condom to contract an STD.

“Kids are exposed to sex at younger and younger ages through TV, the internet and even their friends so it’s not a surprise that this is leading to kids having sex at younger ages. Research shows that parents have the largest impact on a child’s decision making so it’s important to start having conversations about your family’s values and healthy choices frequently and at a young age,” said Kozin.

The Polk County Health Department offers confidential STD testing and treatment. For tips on starting a conversation with your kids visit polkcountyiowa.gov/health.