



**New York City Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene**

Thomas A. Farley, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

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Dear Colleague:

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers. Left untreated, STIs can increase the risk of HIV, complicate pregnancy and lead to other sexual and reproductive health complications.

Most STIs are diagnosed outside public clinics — in outpatient settings, hospitals, correctional facilities and schools. All clinicians should know how to diagnose and manage STIs.

The number of syphilis cases continues to increase in New York City. In 2009*, 1,109 primary and secondary (P&S) syphilis cases were reported in NYC. Preliminary data show that there has been approximately a 4% increase in P&S syphilis cases from 2008 to 2009. Men who have sex with men (MSM) continue to account for the majority of new syphilis infections.

Chlamydia is extremely common in New York City and nationwide, and is especially widespread among adolescents. In 2009*, nearly 66% of NYC cases (approximately 38,000 of 58,000 total cases) occurred among women younger than 25.

More than 100,000 New Yorkers are living with HIV or AIDS. As many as 1 in 4 people do not know they're infected. Without care or treatment, they face poor health outcomes, and are much more likely to transmit HIV.

What Health Care Providers Can Do

Many STIs are asymptomatic, and regular screening is critical to timely detection and treatment.

- Take a sexual history from all patients, including adolescents. *Anyone who is sexually active is at risk for sexually transmitted infections.*
- Make screening for STIs a routine part of medical care. Offer HIV testing to all persons aged 18 to 64.
- Discuss safer sex (limit partners, use condoms every time).
- Report sexually transmitted infections, as required by law.

The enclosed STI Provider Toolkit contains the following resources to help you manage your patients' sexual health:

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2006 STD Treatment Guidelines
- STI Treatment Guidelines Summary Card
- An Update and Review of the Diagnosis and Management of Syphilis
- "Take Action. Stop the Spread" Resource, including STI Screening and Vaccination Guidelines Pocket Chart
- New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) minor's rights card
- "Get Tested for HIV" and "NYC We've Got You Covered" Health Bulletins for Patients
- "Syphilis Is Back!" – patient palm cards
- Partner Services information
- Expedited Partner Therapy information

Thank you for your continued dedication.

Sincerely,

Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

*2009 data annualized