

Early Detection and Intervention

The primary goal of the MDH STD/HIV Partner Services Program is to prevent transmission of HIV and other STDs. However, the program also provides partners, many of whom are unaware of their risk of infection, with critical “early warnings” of possible exposure.

Many STDs can cause permanent damage if not treated early. However, some STDs have few or no obvious symptoms. For example, women infected with gonorrhea or chlamydia are at risk of developing pelvic inflammatory disease, even though they may have no symptoms. Long term complications may include infertility, chronic pain and ectopic pregnancy. Early intervention and treatment cannot only cure patients' gonorrhea or chlamydia, but also prevent dangerous complications of these diseases.

Similarly, early detection of HIV infection is important because certain drug regimens and antiretroviral agents have been shown to slow the deterioration of the immune system, if administered early in the disease process.

Early intervention is especially critical with people infected with a bacterial STD or at risk of STD infection because the risk behaviors for bacterial STDs are similar to some of those for HIV infection – sex without condoms, sex with multiple partners, and sex with a partner who has multiple partners. Syphilis and other STDs that cause genital ulcers put patients at even greater risk of getting or spreading HIV infection because the lesions provide entry and exit points for HIV.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR STDS

The specific STD intervention steps include:

- Identification of infected patients through health provider case reporting to MDH.
- Ensuring that patients receive and follow appropriate antibiotic therapy.
- Counseling patients about how to prevent re-infection.
- Identification and notification of all sexual partners who may be the patient’s source of infection or may have been infected by the patient.
- Ensuring that partners receive medical evaluation and treatment as appropriate.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR HIV

The specific HIV intervention steps include:

- Counseling infected patients about how they can prevent transmitting HIV to others.
- Referring patients for a medical evaluation and other services as appropriate.
- Locating sexual and/or needle sharing partners identified by the patient and notifying them of their risk for infection.
- Referring partners for HIV antibody testing, further counseling and medical evaluation when appropriate.
- Counseling uninfected partners about how to reduce their risk of future exposure to HIV.
- If partners are infected, counseling partners about how to prevent transmitting HIV to others.

Voluntary and Confidential

Participation in the STD/HIV Partner Service Program is voluntary. Once patients or partners have been sufficiently informed about the nature of the program, the decision to participate rests solely with the individual.

Strict confidentiality is a cornerstone of the STD/HIV Partner Services Program, information that may identify the source patient is never disclose to partners or other third parties.

For More Information...

To learn more about the STD/HIV Partner Services Program, call (651) 201-5414

Or, visit our partner services web pages at:
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/dtopics/stds/partnerservices.html>

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How Are Services Initiated?

Partner Service efforts are initiated by a physician report.

By law (Minnesota Rule 4605-7040), physicians are required to submit a case report to MDH on patients with STDs, AIDS or HIV infection.

An HIV/AIDS or STD case report is first sent to the STD and HIV Section. The reporting source, preferably the physician, is then notified that an MDH disease intervention specialist will contact the patient. All follow-up is conducted in a prompt and confidential manner. Patient participation is voluntary.

Similarly, upon receipt of an STD case report from a physician, the report is referred to the Partner Services Program for follow-up. Currently, all cases of early syphilis, and untreated persons with gonorrhea or chlamydia and their sexual partners who need examination, receive follow-up.

THE STD/HIV PARTNER SERVICES PROGRAM



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Infection Disease Epidemiology,
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Limiting the Transmission of HIV and STDs

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), STD and HIV Section, seeks to prevent and control the transmission of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). One of the strategies employed by this program is Partner Services. The purpose of Partner Services is to:

- Assure rapid and appropriate medical evaluation and treatment of infected individuals.
- Counsel infected individuals about how to prevent future infection and transmission of disease to others.
- Identify, notify and rapidly refer for medical evaluation and treatment those persons who have been exposed to disease.

This public health strategy targets persons at greatest risk of transmitting HIV or an STD (those known to be infected) and those at greatest risk of infection (person exposed to the disease). Those at risk of infection include unsuspecting partners who do not see themselves at risk and are not self-motivated by awareness of symptoms to seek STD testing and treatment and/or HIV antibody testing and treatment and/or HIV antibody testing and medical evaluation.

Priorities for disease intervention efforts are determined by the MDH based on the public health importance of a disease and resource availability. Currently, priority attention is given to cases of early syphilis and HIV infection.

STD/HIV disease intervention efforts are carried out by disease intervention specialists of the MDH STD and HIV Section.

To order brochures in another format, such as large print, Braille, or cassette tape, call (651) 201-5414; (651) 201-5797 TTY