

Michael Heggarty, MFT
Health and Human Services Agency
Director

500 CROWN POINT CIRCLE, STE 110
GRASS VALLEY, CA 95945
TELEPHONE (530) 265-1450
(888) 303-1450



Jill Blake, MPA
Public Health Director
Ken Cutler, MD, MPH
Public Health Officer

10075 LEVON AVE STE 202
TRUCKEE, CALIFORNIA 96161
TELEPHONE (530) 582-7814

For Immediate Release
Contact: Dr. Ken Cutler
Phone: 530-265-7154

June 20, 2018

STDs on the Rise in California and Locally

The California Department of Public Health recently noted another in a string of record years for cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Dr. Ken Cutler, the Nevada County Public Health Officer, notes, "We are clearly moving in the wrong direction. In 2012 we received 13 reports of gonorrhea, last year about 60." Nevada County STD rates are still below the California average but are rising faster. At the state level, the rise in congenital syphilis--babies being born with the disease because the mother's infection passed through the placenta--is especially concerning. Congenital syphilis in California more than quadrupled in 5 years. "Fortunately, we have not had a report of a baby born with syphilis in Nevada County for years but given the current trend that could easily change," added Dr. Cutler.

The reasons for the increases in STDs locally, statewide, and nationally has been an area of intense study and some speculation. Possibilities include the decrease in fear of HIV infections, the increase use of social dating apps for sexual connections which can make partner notification challenging, and the closure nationally of many STD clinics. In some places, an increase in testing could also be contributing to more identification of infections.

STDs are preventable with the consistent use of condoms, and many STDs can be cured with antibiotics. Most people with a sexually transmitted infection have no symptoms and do not know they have it. That makes it important for people who are sexually active to talk with their medical provider about regular testing. For more information on STDs, please see <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/STD.aspx#>.

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