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## Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

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### **New health department reports show STDs still on the rise in Alaska**

*Alaska reports highest rate of chlamydia in nation, second highest rate of gonorrhea*

ANCHORAGE — Alaska ranks first and second in the nation for two sexually transmitted diseases, according to two bulletins issued today by the state Section of Epidemiology.

Alaska had the highest chlamydia rate in the country in 2010, and the second highest rate of gonorrhea. Alaska has consistently had the first or second highest rates of chlamydia since 2000. The Department of Health and Social Services noted a rapid increase in new cases of gonorrhea in most regions of the state in 2009.

“It’s critical that our department works with patients, their sexual partners and health care providers to diagnose and treat these infections as soon as possible,” said Dr. Joe McLaughlin, state epidemiologist. “We have to control these epidemics.”

According to the bulletins published today, 6,026 cases of chlamydia were reported to the section in 2010, a 13-percent increase over 2009. In 2010, 1,273 cases of gonorrhea were reported, representing a 23-percent increase in the gonorrhea infection rate over 2009.

Susan Jones, Alaska’s HIV/STD program manager, said it’s important that people understand that the symptoms of gonorrhea and chlamydia can be mild for some patients, so many people may not even know they have the sexually transmitted diseases. Left untreated, the diseases are the leading causes of infertility in women, she said.

The HIV/STD Program is working collaboratively with public and private health care partners and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on strategies to control the epidemics, such as [Expedited Partner Therapy](#), a clinical practice of treating people exposed without a provider first examining the person.

The department recommends that all people who suspect they are infected notify their providers and their sexual partners so that all partners can be tested and treated. Although reporting these diseases is required by law, the department encourages all providers to report any cases promptly to allow critical disease intervention activities to begin as quickly as possible.

To find a place in your community to get tested, call the local public health nursing center, family planning or Planned Parenthood Center, the Alaska Native Regional Health Corporation in your area, or go to the website at <https://www.iknowmine.org>.

Complete copies of the two bulletins are available at <http://www.epi.hss.state.ak.us/default.jsp>.

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