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**Department of Health  
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**STATE OF ALASKA**

**PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Alaska again has extremely high per capita rankings for STD rates**

October 8, 2019 ANCHORAGE – The Centers for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) today released its 2018 STD Surveillance Report. In this annual snapshot of key trends for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in the United States, Alaska again ranks first among states in per capita number of cases for chlamydia and second for gonorrhea. Alaska’s rankings for those STDs remain unchanged from the CDC’s 2017 STD Surveillance Report.

High STD rates are not unusual news for Alaska, but they are alarming and should serve as a reminder to Alaskans to practice safe sex and get tested. Alaska has consistently ranked among the highest per capita among states for chlamydia since tracking began in 1996. Rates of gonococcal infection (GC) – more commonly called gonorrhea – are consistently higher than the national average rates and Alaska has been experiencing a gonorrhea outbreak since October 2017.

In March 2018, the Division of Public Health noted a syphilis outbreak. Although ranked below the national average, syphilis rates in Alaska have increased considerably. In its report, the CDC highlighted a national increase in congenital syphilis, which is when the infection is passed from a mother to a fetus. In Alaska there is an increase in syphilis among women. Screening is an important first step and women should see a doctor if they notice a sore or rash, or if they think they’ve been exposed. Alaska has also recently experienced a cluster of HIV cases in Fairbanks; HIV is not covered in this CDC report.

“Unfortunately, Alaska is a place where you can easily acquire a sexually transmitted disease,” said STD/HIV Program Manager Susan Jones. “And on many STD reports, individuals can have more than one infection at a time. Even though some of these infections seem minor, they are not benign and can cause lifelong problems. We must work together to stop these infections. It is a task for patients to practice safe sex, providers to test for and treat infections, and public health to help control outbreaks. Testing can be your first step, and if you have an STD, get treated and help get all your partners tested and treated.”

Alaska is not alone; nationally, STD reports have surged for the fifth consecutive year and in 2018 they were at an all-time high. We know there are a range of factors contributing to high levels of STDs, both nationally and in Alaska. These factors include decreased condom use among high-risk groups; lack of

access or coverage for medical care; decreases in local STD and partner notification services; the asymptomatic nature of some of these infections; and stigma and discrimination.

For more information:

- [CDC's 2018 STD Surveillance Report](#)
- [CDC's Get Tested: Find a test site near you](#)
- [DHSS HIV/STD Program](#)
- [DHSS Section of Epidemiology](#)

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