



**30 August 2009**

## **NSW Health campaign targets sexually transmissible infections**

The NSW Government today launched a new advertising campaign aimed at lowering the rates of Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs), in particular Chlamydia, among young people aged under 25 years.

NSW Health Minister John Della Bosca said the *Get Tested, Play Safe* campaign supported the Government's *Caring Together: The Health Action Plan for NSW*.

"Under the plan we made a commitment to keeping people healthy by prevention and early detection of health problems and this campaign is a perfect example of that commitment at work," he said.

Mr Della Bosca said the \$1.5 million campaign would involve a range of media including TV, print, online, washroom advertising and a dedicated website - <http://www.gettested.com.au>.

NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant said the advertising would increase young people's awareness of STI testing and treatment and, importantly, remind them to always use condoms.

Dr Chant said the campaign's theme – Sleeping with one is sleeping with many – brought the message to life and the tagline – Get Tested, Play Safe – was a call to action to the target audience.

"STIs other than HIV have risen sharply in NSW, with Chlamydia notifications increasing from 3,489 cases in 2000 to 13,994 cases in 2008," Dr Chant said.

"In part the increase is due to additional testing, however it also indicates increased numbers of infections.

"The increase in Chlamydia notifications has been seen primarily in young heterosexual people living across NSW."

STIs affect people's health, wellbeing and relationships and place a significant economic burden on individuals, populations and the health system. If left untreated they can lead to serious medical conditions such as infertility.

NSW Health established an expert advisory committee made up of medical experts and young people to help oversee the development and implementation of the *Get Tested, Play Safe* campaign.

Chair of Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) NSW, Dr Liz Marles, said GPs were central to the detection, care and prevention of STIs.

"Fortunately, in many cases, a test for an STI is a simple urine sample and treatment is a short course of antibiotics, and GPs are well placed to deal with these issues," Dr Marles said.

Mr Della Bosca said NSW Health, in collaboration with RACGP NSW, had developed specific resources to support GPs with detecting and managing STIs.

"STI's can have serious consequences if left untreated – such as future issues with fertility," said Mr Della Bosca.

"I strongly encourage young people to have regular testing for STIs to avoid unnecessary suffering and inconvenience," Dr Marles said.

“See your doctor for an STI check every time you change regular partners. You don’t have to talk to everyone about STIs – just talk to your doctor and possibly get tested.”

The *Get Tested, Play Safe* campaign will run until the end of October 2009.

*Sexual Health Week* will run 14 – 20 September 2009. Contact local Area Health Service Media Units

## Background

- In NSW there were approximately 17,000 notifications of chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV combined in 2008. The number may be much higher as many people who have an STI have no symptoms of infection.
- STIs are particularly common among young people. Approximately 55 per cent of the STIs reported above occurred in young people aged between 18 and 25 years.
- Many people who have an STI do not have any obvious symptoms or signs, so it’s important they get the facts about how they are spread, how to avoid infection, understand the risks if left untreated, and know what to do if they think they may have one.
- The risk gets higher if people do not always use condoms or have many sexual partners.
- The *NSW Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2006-2010* identifies timely testing and treatment of STIs, particularly around partner change or when a couple decide their relationship has become regular, to be important strategies to reduce the prevalence of STIs.
- It is important that people with STIs are diagnosed early so they can receive proper treatment and avoid ongoing health problems and spreading the infection.
- Testing is simple and infections easy to treat. In many cases a test is a simple urine sample and treatment is a short course of antibiotics.
- If left untreated, STIs can lead to serious and painful health consequences, such as infertility.

**Table 1: Number of STI notifications in NSW, 2000-2008**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Chlamydia</b>	3,489	4,484	5,808	7,765	10,007	11,190	11,993	12,375	13,994
<b>Gonorrhoea</b>	1,060	1,364	1,526	1,329	1,443	1,564	1,724	1,367	1,315
<b>Syphilis</b>	577	544	642	831	1,038	837	882	1,083	1,030
<b>HIV</b>	350	341	394	412	403	391	366	387	322

**Table 2: Number of STI notifications in NSW for ages 18-25 years, 2000-2008**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>Chlamydia</b>	1,459	1,931	2,459	3,585	4,770	5,501	5,796	6,022	6,791
<b>Gonorrhoea</b>	184	254	266	273	329	346	417	311	329
<b>Syphilis</b>	18	11	13	18	29	26	20	24	33
<b>HIV</b>	34	30	38	42	36	42	37	33	41

