

## **LOVE BUGS SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES**

- **Have you been bitten by a love bug?** Statistically in the United States there are 19 million new sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) each year with nearly one-half in the 15-24 age range. Of these, **college-aged men and women account for the highest percentage of new cases of sexually transmitted infection (STI) cases** (CDC, 2005). Louisiana incidence rates for STDs/STI are higher than our neighboring states and the national average (Louisiana Health Report Card, 2006).
- **How does a love bug bite or infect you?** You can get infected by heterosexual or homosexual sexual contact, IV drug use and skin-to-skin contact in some cases.
- **What are the common love bugs and how are they diagnosed?** They include chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, human papillomavirus (HPV) or genital warts, herpes and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Diagnosis is confirmed with a specific culture, lab/blood work and/or PAP smear for women.
- **Chlamydia**, a sexually-transmitted bacterial infection, is the most common STD/STI world-wide. Symptoms include genital discharge, painful urination, enlarged pelvic lymph nodes. Infections are treated with antibiotics. Untreated infections can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease and damage to ovaries or testes leading to infertility.
- **Gonorrhea, a sexually transmitted bacterial infection**, is the second most common STD. African Americans were infected 18 times more often in 2005 than Caucasians (CDC). Symptoms include those mentioned under chlamydia plus sore throat. Treatment and consequences are the same as for Chlamydia.
- **Syphilis**, a bacterial infection, can be transmitted through sexual contact and IV drug use. The incidence has risen 70% over the last 5 years (CDC, 2005). Symptoms include a painless ulcerated sore (chancre), fever or rash. Treatment is with penicillin. Untreated infections may lead to organ damage, including the brain (neurosyphilis).

- **HPV**, a viral infection with many serotypes, causes genital warts and can lead to the development of abnormal PAP smears and cervical cancer in women. Over 20 million Americans are infected (CDC, 2005). Treatment may include topical medications, cryotherapy, laser or surgical removal (warts). Cervical dysplasia is treated by a gynecologist or specialized women's health nurse practitioner.
- **HSV** is a viral infection affecting one in five teens and adults (CDC, 2005). Transmission can be from skin-to-skin contact as well as from sexual contact. Symptoms consist of painful burning, itching and blisters. Treatment is with anti-viral drugs to shorten the episodes, as well as to reduce outbreaks and transmission to your partner. There is **no cure** at this time.
- **HIV** is a viral infection transmitted through heterosexual or homosexual sex as well as IV drug use. Heterosexual transmission occurs more often than homosexual transmission (CDC, 2005). Black males account for more than 75% of new HIV infections (CDC, 2011). Symptoms may not appear for 10-15 years after initial infection and may include fever, loss of appetite, weight loss and fatigue. Consequences are weakening of the immune system, which leads to a higher risk of infections and certain cancers. Treatment with antiviral drugs delays the progression from HIV infection to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). However, there is **no cure** at this time.
- **Prevention is your best method of protection!** If you have any symptoms of infection by *love bugs*, please come to Student Health Service (SHS) Clinic for assessment and treatment. We will team up with you to formulate a strong offensive and defensive battle plan against *love bugs*!

**Cost of testing for Chlamydia, Gonorrhea, Syphilis, and HIV is only \$10.00. Most treatments are free of charge.**

**Other STD testing is available for only the charge of Laboratory Services.**