

With expedited partner therapy, researchers forecast lower rates of sexually transmitted infections

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Sexually transmitted infections have risen dramatically in the past decade, according to the US Centers for Disease Control. New results

from researchers from Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health have shown that using an existing intervention that targets therapy to partners of men who have sex with men (MSM) has the potential to decrease the number of new gonorrhea and chlamydia infections. The findings were recently published in the journal *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*.

Expedited partner therapy (EPT) involves providing oral antibiotics to partners of persons who were recently diagnosed with an STI without requiring testing first to confirm that the partner has contracted the STI, thus alleviating a potential barrier to treatment for partners.

Recommended by the CDC for [heterosexual couples](#), EPT is not often used for same-sex couples. However, a [mathematical model](#) to forecast the future impact of EPT developed by Emory researchers have shown that if EPT were used in 20 percent of eligible MSM, STI incidence could decrease by 27 percent.

"Given the low rates of regular STI screening currently, we found that EPT could substantially reduce STI incidence by targeting MSM with a high likelihood of [infection](#)," says senior author Samuel M. Jenness, assistant professor of epidemiology at Rollins.

But the strategy also has potential drawbacks, as the study also found: EPT used for MSM could result in missed opportunities for HIV screening of partners and overuse of antibiotics if partners are not truly infected with an STI.

"We estimated that the proportion of partners given medication who had no current STI ranged from 52 to 63 percent. The proportion of partners given medication with undiagnosed HIV infection was approximately 4 percent across scenarios," Jenness says. "Future clinical trials should evaluate the promises and potential perils of EPT for MSM, who face a

high and rapidly increasing burden of new sexually transmitted infections."

More information: Kevin M. Weiss et al. Epidemiological Impact of Expedited Partner Therapy for Men Who Have Sex With Men, *Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (2019). [DOI: 10.1097/OLQ.0000000000001058](https://doi.org/10.1097/OLQ.0000000000001058)

Provided by Emory University

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