

One in five Americans has an STD: CDC

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According to 2018 data, one in five people in the United States probably carries a sexually transmitted infection, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

On any given day in 2018, nearly 68 million people had a sexually transmitted disease, according to the new CDC report. There were 26 million new cases that year. The agency refers to these diseases—such as HIV, syphilis and gonorrhea—as sexually transmitted infections, or STIs.

Nearly half of newly acquired STIs occurred in people aged 15 to 24 years, and new cases in 2018 would result in nearly \$16 billion in direct [medical costs](#), the report said.

People with STIs don't always have symptoms. Left untreated, some STIs can increase the risk of HIV [infection](#) or cause [chronic pelvic pain](#), [pelvic inflammatory disease](#), infertility, and/or severe pregnancy and newborn complications, according to the report published online Jan. 23 in the journal *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*.

HIV and [human papillomavirus](#) (HPV) infections are the costliest STIs, according to the report. Medical expenses for these infections include lifetime treatment for people with HIV as well as treatment for HPV-related cancers.

Of the estimated \$16 billion in lifetime medical costs from STIs acquired in 2018, most (\$13.7 billion) were associated with HIV. Another \$755 million were attributed to HPV infections.

More than \$1 billion in lifetime medical costs were connected with chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis combined, the researchers said in a CDC news release.

About 60% of those costs were among 15- to 24-year-olds. Nearly 75% of the \$2.2 billion in non-HIV-related STI medical costs were among women, according to the report.

The total cost of STIs is far higher than the medical costs estimated,

however, the study authors noted. The report didn't include costs associated with lost productivity, other non-[medical expenses](#), or STI prevention.

"The burden of STIs is staggering," said Dr. Jonathan Mermin, director of CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention.

At a time when sexually transmitted infections are at an all-time high, they have fallen out of the national conversation, he said.

"Yet, STIs are a preventable and treatable national health threat with substantial personal and economic impact," Mermin said in the news release. "There is an urgent need to reverse the trend of increasing STIs, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected many STI prevention services."

Dr. Raul Romaguera, acting director for CDC's Division of STD Prevention, said prevention is key.

"There are significant human and financial costs associated with these infections, and we know from other studies that cuts in STI prevention efforts result in higher costs down the road," he said. "Preventing STIs could save billions in medical costs, but more importantly, prevention would improve the health and lives of millions of people."

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about [sexually transmitted infections](#).

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