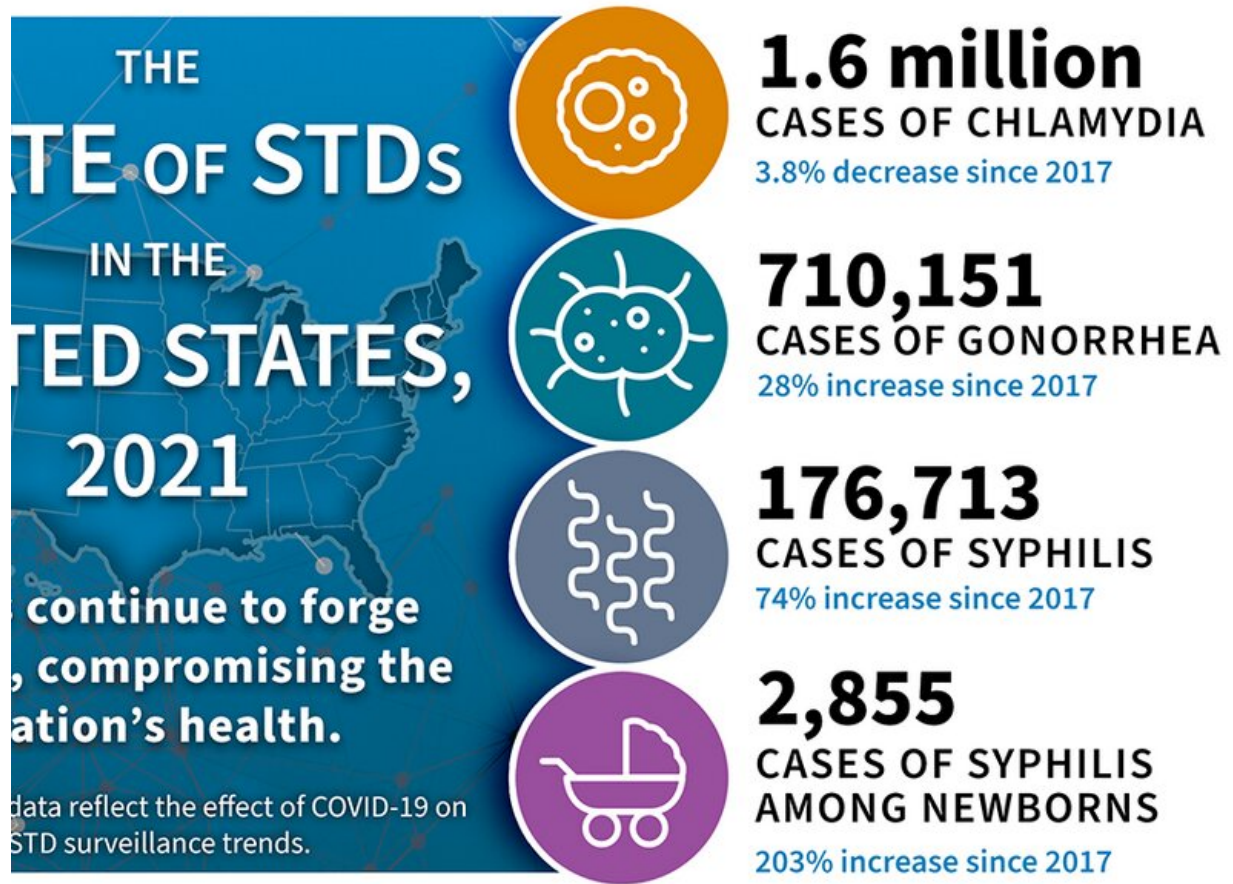


STDs continue to climb in the US

April 11 2023, by Cara Murez



Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are surging in the United States, with notable increases seen in case counts of syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia.

Overall, STIs grew by 7% in 2021, reaching 2.5 million cases, according to the latest data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"The U.S. STI epidemic shows no signs of slowing," Dr. Leandro Mena, director of the CDC's Division of STD Prevention, told CNN.

Syphilis cases jumped sharply, with a 32% increase seen in just one year. This included a rise in cases passed between pregnant mothers and their babies, a scenario that can be deadly: Congenital syphilis caused 220 stillbirths and infant deaths in 2021.

"I am alarmed to see a rise in preventable syphilis and [congenital syphilis](#) cases in our nation," Dr. Anne Zink, president of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers, said in a statement. "When I was training to be a physician years ago, I did not encounter syphilis cases. I now see them regularly. I encourage all physicians to test for this disease, which is easily treatable with penicillin... By including this step in routine appointments, we can save adults and unborn babies from unnecessary pain, harm, or even death."

Meanwhile, chlamydia rates increased by 4% in 2021 and gonorrhea cases by nearly 5%, CNN reported.

Mena pointed to missed opportunities in [prenatal care](#) and maternal treatment of syphilis.

"The most important thing to remember is that congenital syphilis is 100% preventable," Mena said. "In many ways, it is the result of our failure to prevent syphilis among women of reproductive age and their partners."

David Harvey is executive director of the National Coalition of STD

Directors. "Syphilis—and especially congenital syphilis—is the canary in the coal mine for a devastating and out-of-control epidemic of sexually transmitted infections in the U.S.," he said in a statement. "These are completely preventable infections that too often go unseen, undetected, and untreated. We need an all-of-government response that meets the gravity of this crisis," he said.

Mena noted that the pandemic contributed to the increases in STIs.

Stigma also exists for STIs, which means they're also very likely underreported. The true number is probably "staggering," Mena said.

Case rates are also disproportionately high among gay and bisexual men, younger people, and Black and American Indian people.

"To make progress towards ending this STI epidemic, we must really meet people where they are by developing tailored and localized interventions to have the greatest impact," Mena said. "We want to make sure that we're addressing the social and [economic conditions](#) that make it more difficult for some of these populations to stay healthy."

To make matters worse, women are finding it harder to access reproductive [health care](#) services, a recent [report](#) found. This includes routine screenings and [birth control](#). More women reported challenges to access such services in 2021 than did just four years before.

"The lack of access to health care, including testing and treatment for STI, can make it difficult for people to receive the care they need," Mena said. "Decreased funding for [public health](#) and an eroding infrastructure in public health really have limited access to testing-driven services."

More information: The World Health Organization has [more](#) on

sexually transmitted infections.

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