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Staff Report
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Gonorrhea on the rise in North Idaho District says cases have doubled

The Panhandle Health District is reporting an increase in gonorrhea cases in North Idaho.

Though July, 58 cases of gonorrhea were reported in the five northern counties. For the same period in 2016, 27 cases were reported.

The sexually transmitted disease is hitting young people ages 20 to 29 especially hard, said Melanie Collett, a health district spokesman.

Health district epidemiologists are encouraging all sexually active individuals to get tested.

“Case investigations point to several causes, including online dating, limited sex education and unprotected sex,” said Jeff Lee, a district epidemiologist. “... We do know that getting tested on a regular basis and using protection can help reverse this trend and improve community health.”

Gonorrhea, like many sexually transmitted diseases, often produces no symptoms. Left untreated, gonorrhea can cause severe and permanent health issues, such as pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy and infertility.

Gonorrhea is treatable with a short course of antibiotics, though some types of the disease are developing resistance to traditional antibiotics.

The health district offers confidential testing and free condoms at its Care Plus clinics in Hayden, Sandpoint, Kellogg, Bonners Ferry and St. Maries. All sexually active individuals should get screened for STDs at least once a year. Those with multiple or anonymous partners should be screened more frequently, health district officials said.

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