



Sarasota County Health Department | Florida Department of Health
scgov.net | 941-861-5000 | Comcast 19/Verizon 32

March 24, 2011

Media contacts: Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell 941-302-1058;
Dianne_Shipley@doh.state.fl.us
Liz Bumpus, 941-861-2964, cell 941-526-8464;
Liz_Bumpus@doh.state.fl.us

‘Get Yourself Tested’ campaign offers walk-in testing for four sexually transmitted diseases

As part of the [“Get Yourself Tested - GYT”](#) national campaign, the Sarasota County Health Department (SCHD) now offers [STD testing](#) for sexually transmitted diseases, including chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis and HIV, on a walk-in basis with very little wait time. These services are available at the health department’s downtown Sarasota location, 2200 Ringling Blvd., in Room 1106. Hours for walk-in STD testing are Mondays 1-4 p.m., Wednesdays 8:30 a.m.-noon and Thursdays 1-6 p.m. There is no charge for testing, and teens are welcome.

The OraQuick® Rapid HIV Antibody Test, which involves a finger poke to get a small blood sample, provides preliminary test results in about 20 minutes. Urine testing is available for detecting gonorrhea and chlamydia infection. Syphilis testing is done through a blood draw. Testing for other STDs is available by appointment.

These stepped-up efforts to make STD testing easier are in response to the staggering rate of sexually transmitted infections among youth.

“There is a silent epidemic of gonorrhea, chlamydia and other STDs. People may not have symptoms, but may be infected and able to spread the diseases to others,” says Sarasota County Health Department Medical Executive Director William Heymann, M.D.

As many as one in two sexually active young people will contract an STD by age 25 -- and most won’t know it, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC says that those under age 25 represent half of the estimated 19 million STDs occurring in the United States each year. According to disease surveillance reports, STDs are on the rise in the state of Florida. Chlamydia is the most commonly reported STD in Sarasota County and is more likely to infect young people ages 15-24. CDC health officials say that those who have had a sexually transmitted infection are 2-5 times more likely to contract HIV, the virus that can cause AIDS.

When left untreated, STDs can lead to an increased risk of HIV infection, infertility and cancer.

Health officials say a lack of information; misconceptions and social stigma keep many people from getting tested. Others mistakenly think they have been tested as part of routine health care. Since many STDs have no symptoms, most of those who are infected do not know it. The only way to know for sure is to be tested.

Sarasota County joins organizations across the nation, including the CDC, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and its network of health centers, the Kaiser Family Foundation, MTV and others in kicking off National STD Awareness month with the award-winning campaign, “Get Yourself Tested.”

[GYT](#) encourages people under age 25 to talk with health care providers and partners about getting tested for sexually transmitted diseases.

Public health officials encourage everyone to take these steps to prevent STDs:

1. Talk with your partner and health care provider about ways to reduce risk of infection, and about recommended vaccinations and testing.
2. Get tested. Visit findSTDtest.org to find a test site near you.
3. Seek out medical care to treat the disease and to prevent future infections.

For information on STD testing and treatment, call 941-861-2919 or visit the Florida Department of Health’s Face It Florida site, www.faceitflorida.com. The CDC also has a website, <http://www.cdc.gov/STD/sam/default.htm>, which includes podcasts and social media resources.

-end-