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Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP)

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SHARP News

CDC Issues Report on Tests for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea

An estimated 3 million *Chlamydia trachomatis* infections occur annually among sexually active adolescent and young adults in the United States. The majority of persons with *C. trachomatis* infection are not aware of their infection because they do not have symptoms that would prompt them to seek medical care. In 2001, *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* was second in frequency only to *C. trachomatis* among reported communicable infections in the United States. The age distribution of gonorrhoeae infections is similar to that for *C. trachomatis* infection, is confined to infected mucosal areas, and often can be without symptoms in females. Untreated, *C. trachomatis* and *N. gonorrhoeae* infections can lead to serious complications. Consequently, screening is necessary to identify and treat this infection.

Choosing the most suitable *C. trachomatis* and *N. gonorrhoeae* screening tests, performing tests properly, and reporting results to allow appropriate treatment, prevention counseling and services for sex partners are critical to reduce the disease burden resulting from these infections.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has published "*Screening Tests to Detect Chlamydia trachomatis and Neisseria gonorrhoeae Infections - 2002*" in their Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Recommendations and Reports (51(RR15);1-27). This R&R describes the extensive array of tests now available to screen for *C. trachomatis* and *N. gonorrhoeae* infections, including the newest generation of tests, nucleic acid amplification tests (NATTs). These guidelines are intended to assist laboratorians, clinicians, and managers 1) select screening tests for *C. trachomatis* or *N. gonorrhoeae* from the complex array of tests available; 2) establish standard operating procedures for collecting, processing, and analyzing specimens; and 3) interpret test results for reporting, counseling, and treating patients.

Key topics in the report include:

- Selection of tests that are appropriate
- Consideration that NAATs can provide increased sensitivity and new opportunities for testing, but NAATs are more complex and can increase costs
- Consideration of combined use of NAATs and non-NAATs that might provide some of the advantages of NAATs with smaller increases in costs
- Consideration of the role of additional testing, appropriate interpretation of test results, and patient counseling to reduce the occurrence and impact of false-positive results.

View the entire report on-line at http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/ or at the SHARP website at http://www-nehc.med.navy.mil/hp/sharp/index.htm. Order printed copies at http://www.cdc.gov/STD/LabGuidelines/.