



SHARP News



Chlamydia: Infection Prevalent Among Female Army Recruits

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"Chlamydia: Infection Prevalent Among Female Army Recruits"
Women's Health Weekly (09.04.03)

Nearly 10 percent of female US Army recruits tested positive for the bacterium that causes the STD chlamydia, according to a new study.

Researchers from the Department of Defense, the Army and Johns Hopkins University also discovered that the number of recruits testing positive for the STD increased over duration of the study (1996-1999). "These rates are of great concern, and the Army should implement routine screening of its female recruits at entry into the military to protect their health," said lead author Dr. Charlotte Gaydos, associate professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

"While chlamydia infection usually shows no symptoms in women, it is a major underlying cause of pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy, and infertility," said Gaydos.

The study results are clear evidence of the need for initial and continued screening programs for young women entering the Army, Gaydos said. Such programs have proven to be cost effective - particularly when compared to the health problems associated with untreated infections - and considering that a highly sensitive test requiring only a urine sample is now available, she continued.

The researchers conducted urine-based testing for chlamydia on 23,010 non-healthcare-seeking female Army recruits between January 1996 and June 1999. They found that 9.51 percent of women tested positive for chlamydia for all years the study was conducted, and that the rates increased from 8.51 percent to 9.92 percent during the course of the study.

Several risk factors were associated with infection, including black race, youth (under age 25), Southern hometowns, more than one sex partner, and a history of other STDs.

According to CDC, chlamydia is the most frequently reported bacterial STD in the United States. In 1999, more than 650,000 cases were reported, and three of every four cases occurred in people under age 25. Under-reporting is substantial because most people with chlamydia are unaware of their infection and therefore do not seek testing.

The study, "Sustained High Prevalence of Chlamydia trachomatis Infections in Female Army Recruits," was published in the July issue of the journal *Sexually Transmitted Diseases* (2003;30(7):539-544).

Sexual Health and Responsibility Program (SHARP)

Navy Environmental Health Center, Directorate for Population Health, 620 John Paul Jones Circle Suite 1100, Portsmouth VA 23708-2103
voice: (757) 953-0974 (DSN 377) fax: x-0688 homepage: www-nehc.med.navy.mil/sharp e-mail: sharp@nehc.nar.med.navy.mil
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