

In previous years, we have had some declines in some diseases and increases in others. But we are concerned about the alarming increases we are seeing in chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis, stated Gail Bolan, MD, director of the CDC's Division of STD Prevention, and the study's lead researcher. We are concerned that most of the surging rates are among men. Men are driving these increases. There is an urgent need to tackle the increases we are seeing.

The rise in syphilis among MSM can be partially attributed to a decline in the use of condoms. According to the [CDC](#) [4] the incidence of unprotected, anal intercourse within the previous 12 months rose from 48 percent in 2005 to 57 percent in 2011. There are several theories that can explain this upswing.

The first is that there's a phenomenon referred to as [seroadaptation](#) [5] where HIV-positive partners confer some protective effect when they expose HIV-negative people to HIV. What they also are exposing each other to is not isolated to HIV; over half of men with syphilis in 2014 were also HIV-positive. Additionally, the introduction of Truvada, a medication given for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to reduce rates of HIV transmission, could be encouraging MSM to forego using condoms.

[Michael Weinstein](#) [6], president of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, places the blame on public health officials as well as the CDC, stating, the CDC's ill-advised strategy of mass treatment with Truvada poses a significant risk to the condom culture. He went on to say, I think there's a subtle message that condom use is not that important any longer.

Truvada, while effective at reducing transmission of HIV, does not protect against other STDs.

To expand on that, an HIV diagnosis is no longer a death sentence; instead now it's considered to be just a chronic disease. So long as patients are compliant with their antiretroviral therapy, they can live long and healthy lives. I think that people are less afraid of HIV," Weinstein added. "We're a victim of our own success.

A recent [Washington Post](#) [7] article reported on a campaign by Weinstein's Los Angeles-based group that cautions individuals against random internet hookups using dating apps such as Tinder or Grindr. The group purchased billboard advertising implying that using these apps equates to becoming infected with an STD.

Weinstein has stated that the aim of the campaign is to link the rise of dating apps to recent increases in STD rates in some cities. These apps seem to offer sex on demand and encourage random, casual sexual encounters. One [study](#) [8] seems to be able to attribute a 15.9 percent rise in HIV cases over a 10-year period to the introduction of Craigslist.

What compounds the problem of increasing rates of STDs is the concomitant rise of antibiotic resistant infections, including those that are sexually transmitted. Whether it is complacency, ignorance or lack of access to adequate healthcare, it must be recognized that what is happening is a serious public health problem -- and that combating the rise of STDs requires a multi-pronged, multidisciplinary approach.

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2015/11/20/alarming-rise-in-sexually-transmitted-diseases>

Links

[1] http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/shutterstock_134502683.jpg

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[3] <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats14/std-trends-508.pdf>

[4] <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6247a4.htm>

[5] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3076302/>

[6] <http://news.health.com/2015/11/18/syphilis-gonorrhea-chlamydia-rates-rising-for-first-time-in-years-cdc/>

[7] <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/09/29/billboards-linking-tinder-to-stds-are-latest-battleground-in-online-dating-wars/>

[8] http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2035585