

# OVER A MILLION NEW CASES OF STIS DETECTED DAILY WORLDWIDE: WHO

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

Every day, more than 1 million new cases of curable sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are detected in people aged 15-49 years, according to latest data released by the World Health Organisation (WHO). This amounts to more than 376 million new cases annually of four infections — chlamydia, gonorrhoea, trichomoniasis and syphilis.

Dr. Peter Salama, executive director, Universal Health Coverage, WHO, “We are seeing a concerning lack of progress in stopping the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STI) worldwide. This is a wake-up call for a concerted effort to ensure everyone, everywhere, can access the services they need to prevent and treat these debilitating diseases.”

Published online by the bulletin of the WHO, the research shows that, among men and women aged 15-49 years, there were 127 million new cases of chlamydia in 2016; 87 million cases of gonorrhoea; 6.3 million cases of syphilis; and 156 million cases of trichomoniasis.

These STIs have a profound impact on the health of adults and children worldwide. If untreated, they can lead to serious and chronic health effects that include neurological and cardiovascular disease, infertility, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirths, and increased risk of HIV. They are also associated with significant levels of stigma and domestic violence.

Syphilis alone caused an estimated 2,00,000 stillbirths and newborn deaths in 2016, making it one of the leading causes of infant mortality globally.

The WHO, however, admits, that the study has its limitations.

“First, limited prevalence data was available, despite an eight-year time window for data inclusion. The source studies included people in different age groups and used a range of diagnostic tests, so adjustment factors were applied to standardise measures across studies. Third, owing to the absence of empirical studies, incidence estimates were derived from the relationship between prevalence and duration of infection, and data on the average duration of infection for each of the four infections are also limited,” it said.

Warning that STIs remain a persistent and endemic health threat worldwide, the WHO noted that, since the last published data for 2012, there has been no substantive decline in either the rates of new or existing infections.

On average, approximately 1 in 25 people globally have at least one of these STIs, according to the latest figures, with some experiencing multiple infections at the same time.

Timely and affordable testing and treatment are crucial for reducing the burden of STIs globally, alongside efforts to encourage people who are sexually active to get screened for STIs.

The WHO further recommends that pregnant women should be systematically screened for syphilis as well as HIV. All bacterial STIs can be treated and cured with widely available medication. However, recent shortages in the global supply of benzathine penicillin has made it

more difficult to treat syphilis.

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