



MEDIA RELEASE

Minister for Health and Ageing

Tony Abbott MHR

27 June 2005

ABB078/05

Pilot testing program for chlamydia

The Commonwealth Government will provide \$12.5 million over four years for increased awareness, improved surveillance and a pilot testing program for chlamydia.

This commitment is in response to public health concerns expressed in the First National Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) Strategy launched today.

In 2004, there were approximately 36,000 chlamydia notifications, a 20 per cent increase from 2003. Every sexually active person is at risk of contracting chlamydia. However, the risk of contracting it is higher among sexually active young people with multiple partners. Up to 90 per cent of women and 50 per cent of men have no symptoms so most people infected are not aware of their infection and may not seek health care.

Once diagnosed, chlamydia can easily be treated and cured. If left untreated, chlamydia can cause serious health problems including infertility.

The new pilot testing program will be designed in consultation with experts and will be targeted at women aged 18-30.

The new National STIs Strategy will run from 2005 to 2008 concurrently with the National HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Strategies.

There have also been increases in notifications of gonorrhoea and syphilis among gay men. It's important to ensure that people at risk of STIs have the necessary information and services to protect their health.

There is increasing evidence that STIs, particularly ulcerative STIs, can increase an individual's risk of acquiring HIV. As well, people infected with both HIV and STIs are more likely to pass HIV onto their partners so preventing and treating STIs should also help limit the spread of HIV/AIDS.

This strategy has been developed in partnership with medical, scientific and health care professionals, community groups and other governments.

For more information see

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/phd-sti-index.htm>

For more information call Mr Abbott's office on ph 02 6277 7220.