



**PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA**

Central Michigan District Health Department  
*"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"*

For more information, please call: (989) 773-5921 ext. 8409  
2012 E. Preston Avenue, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858, [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org)

**To: Local Newspapers**

**From: Lorrie Youngs**

**Subject: National Condom Week**

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**National Condom Week**

National Condom Week is recognized from February 14<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup>. This week is used to educate consumers, patients, students, and professionals about the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STI's), AIDS and teenage pregnancy. The only way to prevent STI's, AIDS and pregnancy is abstinence but if that option is not for you, using a condom or latex barrier is another way of preventing infections.

The national and state statistics for STI's are disheartening; due to the fact we continue to have an increase in infections that are easily avoided by use of condoms. The national rate of Chlamydia is the highest ever reported for any STI, with a total of 1,307,893 cases in 2010. Gonorrhea, the second most commonly reported STI, totaled 309,341 cases in 2010. Syphilis rates are the highest since 1995 at 45,834. Chlamydia rates have increased 5.1%, Gonorrhea rates have increased 2.9% and syphilis rates have increased 2.2% since 2009. An estimated 18,800 Michigan citizens are infected with HIV and almost 4,000 are unaware of their infection. Michigan ranks 10<sup>th</sup> for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea out of the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Early diagnosis and intervention is an important component to decrease the risks of spreading the infection and to prevent complications that go along with STI's. STI's left untreated can be painful, make you very sick, and could cause death. Some STI's that go untreated for a long period of time can make males and females infertile. STI's can also cause birth defects or health problems in newborns.

Common signs or symptoms of some STI's may be: unusual vaginal or penile discharge, unusual odor, any type of bump, lump, sore, rash, itching, swelling of lymph nodes, painful urination, pain or burning with intercourse, or lower abdominal pain. Testing is the only way to be sure that you don't have an STI.

Many are afraid to use barriers such as condoms or other methods; or are uncomfortable talking about STI's with their partners because they are too embarrassed. A person should mentally practice or anticipate what he or she would say or do in certain situations, to reduce awkward feelings and to prevent the transmission of STI's.

Plan in advance to use protection, and be prepared for the unexpected. Please remember, condoms go through rigorous testing and go above and beyond adequate safety measure testing. You must store condoms in a cool, dry place and out of direct sunlight. Don't keep condoms in temperatures above 85 degrees. Always note the expiration date before using and make sure the package is sealed without any rips. If you use lubrication, which Lorrie Youngs, a CMDHD Health Educator recommends, you must use only water-based lubricants with latex condoms. Avoid oil-based products like creams, petroleum jelly, body lotion, massage oil, or baby oil which will damage the latex and often cause them to break.

Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) is alerting the public to the continued need for safe sex. The need for condom awareness is based on staggering health statistics, including the fact that the United States has the world's largest rates of curable STI's. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 19 million new infections occur each year, almost half of them are among young people ages 15 to 24. A study that was conducted by Indiana University showed that within 2 years of having sex for the first time, half of teenage girls may be infected with at least one of the three common STI's, often those girls are infected by age 15. Despite the fact that STI's are extremely widespread and add an estimated \$13 billion dollars to the nation's healthcare cost each year, most people in the United States remain unaware of the risks and consequences of STI's.

Consistent and proper condom use is an effective method to prevent unwanted pregnancies, HIV/AIDS transmissions and sexually transmitted infections. For more information on condoms, the proper use of condoms, and/or STI's, call Central Michigan District Health Department at 989-773-5921, ext. 8409 and we will be happy to assist you with any questions, concerns, or testing. Always remember that all sex should be safer sex. Below are a few points to keep handy for when you are considering having sex.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon Counties.

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- Don't wait until the heat of the moment to bring it up. Talk about condom use before you are in a situation where you might need one.
- Be direct about your feelings.
- You may want to practice what you are going to say to your partner.
- Make sure you send a consistent message that you want to use condoms every time you have sex.
- Discuss with your partner which of you will provide the condoms.
- Emphasize that condoms are essential to protect each other's health.