

Reproductive and Sexual Health

Overview & Impact

Life Stages & Determinants

Latest Data

An estimated 19 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are diagnosed each year in the United States—almost half of them among young people age 15 to 24. An estimated 1.1 million Americans are living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and 1 out of 5 people with HIV do not know they have it. Untreated STDs can lead to serious long-term health consequences, especially for adolescent girls and young women, including reproductive health problems and infertility, fetal and perinatal health problems, cancer, and further sexual transmission of HIV.

For many, reproductive and sexual health services are the entry point into the medical care system. These services improve health and reduce costs by not only covering pregnancy prevention, HIV and STD testing and treatment, and prenatal care, but also by screening for intimate partner violence and reproductive cancers, providing substance abuse treatment referrals, and counseling on nutrition and physical activity. Each year, publicly funded family planning services help prevent 1.94 million unintended pregnancies, including 400,000 teen pregnancies.¹ For every \$1 spent on these services, nearly \$4 in Medicaid expenditures for pregnancy-related care is saved.^{2, 3}

Improving reproductive and sexual health is crucial to eliminating health disparities, reducing rates of infectious diseases and infertility, and increasing educational attainment, career opportunities, and financial stability.

The Reproductive and Sexual Health Leading Health Indicators Are:

- [Sexually active females receiving reproductive health services \(FP-7.1\)](#)
- [Knowledge of serostatus among HIV-positive persons \(HIV-13\)](#)

Health Impact of Reproductive and Sexual Health

Reproductive and sexual health is a key component to the overall health and quality of life for both men and women. Reproductive and sexual health services can:

- Prevent unintended pregnancies. Nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended. Risks associated with unintended pregnancy include low birth weight, postpartum depression, delays in receiving prenatal care, and family stress.
- Prevent adolescent pregnancies. More than 400,000 teen girls age 15 to 19 give birth each year in the United States.⁴
- Detect health conditions early. Prenatal care can detect gestational diabetes or preeclampsia before it causes problems, and taking prenatal vitamins can prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord.
- Increase the detection and treatment of STDs. Untreated STDs can lead to serious long-term health consequences, especially for adolescent girls and young women.
- Decrease rates of infertility. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that undiagnosed and untreated STDs cause at least 24,000 women in the United States each year to become infertile.
- Slow the transmission of HIV through testing and treatment.⁵ People living with HIV who receive antiretroviral therapy are 92% less likely to transmit HIV to others.⁶

References

¹Guttmacher Institute. In Brief: Facts on Publicly Funded Contraceptive Services in the United States. New York, NY: 2011. Available from: http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_contraceptive_serv.pdf [PDF - 184KB] External Web Site Policy



Track Progress Toward LHIs!

[Check out our interactive infographic](#) to see progress toward the Reproductive and Sexual Health indicators and other Healthy People LHIs.

Related Resources

Find evidence-based resources from these related topic areas:

[Family Planning](#)
[HIV](#)

Original LHI Infographics

Have you seen the latest infographic on Reproductive and Sexual Health?
[Check it out!](#)

²Gold RB, Sonfield A, Richards CL, et al. Next Steps for America's Family Planning Program: Leveraging the Potential of Medicaid and Title X in an Evolving Health Care System. New York, NY: Guttmacher Institute; 2009. Available from:

<http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/NextSteps.pdf> [PDF - 1.4MB] External Web Site Policy

³Frost J, Finer L, Tapales A. The impact of publicly funded family planning clinic services on unintended pregnancies and government cost savings. J Health Care Poor Underserved. 2008;19(3):778–796.

⁴Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Preventing teen pregnancy in the U.S. CDC Vital Signs. Atlanta, GA: 2011. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/VitalSigns/pdf/2011-04-vitalsigns.pdf> [PDF - 1.57MB]

⁵Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HIV testing in the U.S. CDC Vital Signs. Atlanta, GA: 2010. Available from <http://www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/docs/Vital-Signs-Fact-Sheet.pdf> [PDF - 1.39MB]

⁶National Prevention Council, Office of the Surgeon General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Prevention Strategy. Washington, DC: 2011. p.45. Available from <https://www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities/prevention/strategy/report.pdf> [PDF - 4.66MB]

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