

Director's Message

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the third issue of the Sexual Health Review! In this issue, you will find updates on abortion rights and MPV (monkeypox), a preview for this year's PrEP Aware Week, and a spotlight on what Erie County is doing with respect to EPT promotion.



Sexual Health promotion is more important than ever. As resources for abortion access have been diminished in some states around the country, New York State has emerged as a leader in supporting persons in need of this life-saving service. Further, stigma around MPV threatens the decades of work we have done to support all communities in being able to live sexually healthy lives. We hope together we can build a new and stronger foundation to support all persons in their right to sexual health.

Dr. Rachel Malloy, OSHE Director

Table of Contents

Sexual Health	2
Media / News	3
MPV (Monkeypox)	4
Spotlight	5
OSHE: Get Involved	6
AI Initiatives	6
Ask OSHE!	7

Sexual Health

Sexual Health is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality.

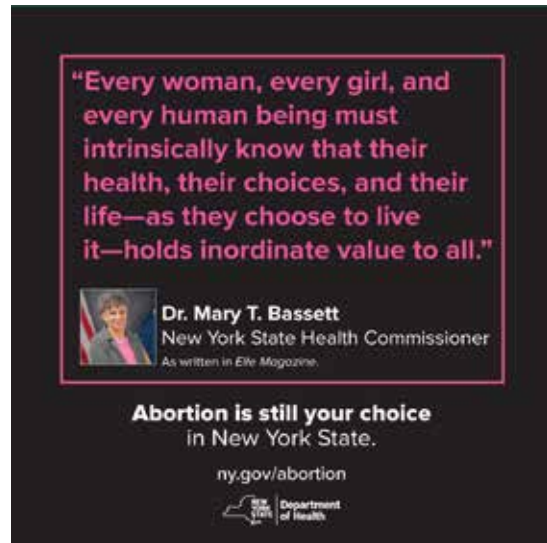
The American Sexual Health Association (ASHA) defines sexual health as, “the ability to embrace and enjoy our sexuality throughout our lives. It is an important part of our physical and emotional health.”
(source: ashasexualhealth.org)

Being sexually healthy means:

- Knowing that **sexuality** is a full and natural part of life and involves more than sexual behavior.
- Being able to have **sexual pleasure, satisfaction, and intimacy** when desired.
- **Communication:** being able to talk about sexual health with others including sexual partners and health care providers.
- Being able to recognize and respect the **sexual rights** we all share.
- Having access to **sexual health information, education, and care.**
- **Prevention, care, and treatment:** Putting a stop to STIs and unplanned pregnancies and seeking care and treatment when needed.
(source: ashasexualhealth.org)



Reproductive Health



Recent DOH social media messaging around reproductive health.

PrEP Awareness Week



Save the Date
October 24–31, 2022

health.ny.gov/PrepForSex



Expedited Partner Therapy

Opinion article in STAT by
Rachel Solnick, MD and Jason Zucker, MD

**Expedited partner therapy:
an effective way to treat STIs**

<https://www.statnews.com/2022/04/25/expedited-partner-therapy-treat-sexually-transmitted-infections/>

PrEP Aware Week 2022

PrEP Aware Week 2022 will take place October 24th through the 31st. This year's activities will again follow a collaborative model, with community-based organizations helping to make decisions about the direction of the campaign. This year's theme is Portraits of PrEP. The campaign is supported by 8 diverse ambassadors from each collaborator associated with this event and will include a Spanish-language speaker. We are very excited to announce, that for the first time since PrEP Aware Week began, we have been able to conduct an in-person photoshoot to capture ambassador portraits; their stories and videos. Every year we ask for your help to make PrEP Aware Week even more impactful than last. Participation in this event can be as small or big as you want. You can help celebrate PrEP Aware Week by using a branded email signature or zoom background, hosting a webinar, or having a tabling event. All of these are great ways you can participate in this year's PrEP Aware Week. We hope this advanced notice will give you an opportunity to plan your best year yet. A social media toolkit and additional information and events will be released closer to this year's event. It is never too early to start planning how you will celebrate this year's PrEP Aware Week! We will send along activity inspiration sheets and save the dates which are available now, and other information as it rolls out.

MPV (Monkeypox)

Who is at risk for contracting MPV?

MPV spreads through close, physical contact between people. This means anyone can get MPV. However, based on the current outbreak, certain populations are being affected by MPV more than others, including men who report having sex with men (MSM).

Based on previous outbreaks of MPV around the world, some groups may also be at heightened risk for severe outcomes if they contract MPV. This includes people with weakened immune systems, elderly New Yorkers, young children under 8 years of age, and pregnant people.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of MPV can include:

- Rashes, bumps, or blisters on or around the genitals or in other areas like your hands, feet, chest, or face.
- Flu-like symptoms, such as fever, headache, muscle aches, chills, and fatigue. These symptoms may occur before or after the rash appears, or not at all.

How does MPV spread?

MPV is spread through close, physical contact between individuals.

This includes:

- Direct contact with MPV sores or rashes on an individual who has MPV.
- Respiratory droplets or oral fluids from someone with MPV, particularly for those who have close contact with someone or are around them for a long period of time.

- It can also be spread through contact with objects or fabrics (e.g., clothing, bedding, towels) that have been used by someone with MPV.

How can I protect myself?

New Yorkers can protect themselves by taking simple steps, which are especially important for those who may be at higher risk for severe disease, including people with weakened immune systems:

- Ask your sexual partners whether they have a rash or other symptoms consistent with MPV.
- Avoid skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a rash or other MPV-related symptoms.
- If you are exposed or experience symptoms, make sure to reach out to a health care provider.
- Follow reputable sources of health information, including NYSDOH, CDC, and your local county health department.
- Get vaccinated.

For more information

What you should know

<https://health.ny.gov/publications/13671.pdf>

NYSDOH

<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/monkeypox/?MonkeyPox>

CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html>

Local health department

https://www.health.ny.gov/contact/contact_information/

Erie County Department of Health introduces Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) hotline and expands free medication access to treat partners of people diagnosed with an STI

In response to notable growth in certain sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Erie County, the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) expanded its EPT – Every Partner Treated – program. EPT, or expedited partner therapy, provides prescription treatment to the partners of individuals who have been diagnosed with chlamydia, gonorrhea or trichomoniasis, without those partners having to be seen by a medical professional.

“Sexual health is an important part of overall health, and our department’s Sexual Health Clinic is here to support that aspect of personal health,” **said Commissioner of Health Dr. Gale Burstein.** “Often, sexual partners of people infected with STIs are also infected and unaware because they do not have symptoms. Treating the partners of people infected with STIs will improve the partners’ health and prevent reinfection of the person just treated. To expand access to this treatment, we created a new phone line – (716) 858-4EPT. This number and associated web site (www.erie.gov/EPT) are specifically for people who have been exposed to an STI.”

She continued, “After screening by one of our public health nurses, they can receive fast and free treatment, either through the mail or for pickup from our clinic at 608 William Street.” Treatment for all partners is an important way to reduce the risks of reinfection.

About one in five people in the U.S. has an STI, and these infections can lead to discomfort, pain in the abdomen, rectum or testicles, and infertility. “Most people with STIs do not have symptoms,” **said Dr. Burstein.** “But if left untreated, STIs increase the risk of HIV transmission and can lead to miscarriages, premature labor, low infant birth weight and other harms to a fetus or baby.”

The Erie County Sexual Health Clinic at 608 William Street offers testing, treatment, and education. Free condoms are also available. This walk-in clinic is open weekdays, and available for anyone 12 years of age and older. STI testing is confidential, and no one is denied testing or treatment based on their ability to pay. Call (716) 858-7687 for information or call (716) 858-4EPT to access EPT.

OSHE: Get Involved

Congenital Syphilis Elimination Strategic Planning Group (CSESPG)

We are looking to find New York State partners who are interested in utilizing their expertise towards congenital syphilis elimination.

Mission: The Mission of the New York State CSESPG is to outline a coordinated, comprehensive, and systematic approach to reducing and eliminating congenital syphilis.

The intent of the CSESPG is to implement a strategy to help reduce the number of missed congenital syphilis prevention opportunities through goals, strategies and priority recommendations that would be implemented by NYS as best practices for reducing congenital syphilis and as a strategy to influence congenital syphilis elimination.

The Congenital Syphilis Elimination Strategic Planning Group (CSESPG) will develop and finalize a comprehensive Congenital Syphilis Elimination Framework (CSEF) through a health equity lens based on several areas of focus (i.e., prevention, education, community-based

programming, surveillance & research, medical care & treatment, policy and planning, marketing and advocacy). The CSESPG group will also be responsible for developing strategies and recommended action items to reach the goals of the CSEF.

Potential Time Commitment:

- CSESPG Full Meetings are projected to occur once bimonthly, time frame TBD
- CSESPG Subgroup Meetings are projected to occur based on areas of focus, the subgroup will meet at least once in between the bimonthly CSESPG meeting.

More information to come. If you are interested or know someone who may be interested in the CSESPG please contact:

Cord Stone, Ed.D.

Office of Sexual Health and Epidemiology
Cord.stone@health.ny.gov

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WXQVCVY>



AI Initiatives

Save the Date!

The 2022 Ending the Epidemic (ETE) Summit and World AIDS Day events will be held virtually November 29 – December 1, 2022. This year's theme is Collaborating for Change: Partnering for Health Equity. Events will be held virtually via the Whova app. Register here: https://whova.com/portal/registration/nysdo3_202211/ Please email ete@health.ny.gov with questions.

Home Test Kits

Everyone can take charge of their own health through STI Home Testing. Be on the lookout for STI Home Testing where you can order STI tests to give to your clients/patients or where clients/patients who you work with can order their own tests. For more information visit: https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/std/docs/self_collection.pdf

Ask OSHE!

We welcome you to reach out to us at: stdc@health.ny.gov with any questions, requests for data, need for technical assistance, and to order free sexual health educational materials.

NYSDOH AIDS Institute Office of Sexual Health & Epidemiology

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Albany, NY 12237-0670

Phone: (518) 474-1387

Fax: (518) 486-5927

Email: stdc@health.ny.gov

Online: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/std/>