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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NHS Tayside launches gonorrhoea campaign

NHS Tayside is launching a gonorrhoea awareness campaign starting this week (beginning 16 May) as there has been a rise in the number of people being diagnosed with the infection.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are on the increase in both Tayside and the UK so people should always practice safe sex and protect themselves.

Dr Finn Romanes, Consultant in Public Health Medicine for NHS Tayside, said, "Although the number of people in the NHS Tayside area who have tested positive for gonorrhoea is not large, there has been an increase in recent months, and it would appear that there has been a rise in cases diagnosed in January 2011 compared to the same time the previous year.

"Almost all of these cases have occurred in young men and women aged under 25 years. Health professionals want the public to be aware of the potential for spread and the long-term health effects of gonorrhoea and other STIs."

Gonorrhoea is an STI caused by bacteria found mainly in discharge from penis and vaginal fluid from infected men and women. It is easily passed on through intimate sexual contact.

Gonorrhoea can be successfully prevented by using condoms (male or female) every time you have sex and by using a condom if you have oral sex. Gonorrhoea can be successfully treated and cleared with antibiotics.

Senior Health Specialist Richard McIntosh said, "Reducing STIs remains a priority for NHS Tayside.

"Unprotected sex can lead to high levels of STIs and can also lead to unintended pregnancy. We want to encourage young people to understand the importance of contraception and the need to practice safer sex.

"Gonorrhoea, if left untreated, can lead to serious long-term health problems and even infertility.

"NHS Tayside's Public Health team is asking anyone, especially men and women under 25 years of age, who has experienced an unusual discharge from the penis or vagina or pain when urinating, to contact the Tayside Sexual and Reproductive Health Service for an STI test. A self-testing kit is available which is easy and also tests for Chlamydia. Another option is to visit your GP if you have symptoms.

Media Information



Press Release

“We are also encouraging people who think they may have been exposed to an STI, even if they do not have any symptoms, to contact their GP or The Corner in Dundee for a simple test. By doing that and identifying new episodes of infection we can treat the individual and ensure they cannot go on to unintentionally infect others.”

Testing for those with no symptoms includes a urine sample from men and a self-taken vaginal swab from women. No examination is required. If the test for gonorrhoea is positive the individual will be contacted by a sexual health adviser to arrange treatment and discuss partner notification. They will be asked at the time of testing if they consent to being contacted in this way.

NHS Tayside’s gonorrhoea poster and radio campaign is aimed at men and women, particularly those under 25 years and is intended to increase awareness of the benefits of condom use, symptoms of gonorrhoea and services that are available.

Anyone who is sexually active can contract gonorrhoea, especially people who change their partners frequently or do not use a barrier method of contraception i.e. condoms, when having sexual intercourse.

Men with gonorrhoea often complain of pain passing urine together with a discharge from the end of the penis, and occasionally may experience pain and swelling of the testicles. Women may have no symptoms or notice an increase in vaginal discharge, which may be associated with abdominal pain, pain during sex, or in the longer term, infertility. Pregnant women can pass the infection to their baby and gonorrhoea can cause a pregnant woman to go into labour too early so the baby is born prematurely.

If you or your partner is diagnosed with gonorrhoea, you should not have sex until you have both finished your treatment course. If you are diagnosed with gonorrhoea, anyone you have recently had sex with may have it too so it is important that your current partner and any other recent sexual partners are tested and treated.

NHS Tayside offers a range of services for anyone who needs advice or emergency contraception. More information and advice for all ages, including outlets where free condoms are available can be found at www.sexualhealthtayside.org. Anyone needing confidential advice can call the Sexual Health Helpline on 0800 567 123 or Sexwise (for under 18s) on 0800 28 29 30.

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