



Rick Scott
Governor

For Immediate Release
March 31, 2011

Contact: Marne Cothran
Phone: 941-624-7200 extension 7261
Email: marne_cothran@doh.state.fl.us



NEWS RELEASE

**Charlotte County Health Department Offers Free Testing
for Sexually Transmitted Diseases
– Testing is Free 3 Days in April for STD Awareness Month –**

Port Charlotte (FL) – April is STD Awareness month and the Charlotte County Health Department is offering free STD testing. Testing will be available April 4th at the Punta Gorda Clinic, April 12th at Port Charlotte Clinic and April 15th at the Englewood Clinic. The Florida Department of Health recommends that everyone who is sexually active should get tested and get treated if they are infected.

There are approximately 19 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in the U.S. each year, almost half of them among people ages 15 to 24. By age 24, approximately one in three sexually active people will have contracted an STD.

Most STDs can be easily diagnosed and treated, but they often have no symptoms and go undetected. Some STDs are curable with antibiotics; others, though not curable, can be treated to help reduce symptoms or lessen the disease's effects. "Many of those who are infected with an STD do not know it, since some STDs have no symptoms. The only way to know for sure is to be tested," said Mary Kay Burns, Charlotte County Health Department Interim Administrator. "Left untreated, STDs can cause serious long-term health problems." Some of the long-term health effects include: infertility, low birth weight, pelvic inflammatory disease, neurological damage, and the spread of infection to others.

The most deadly of all STDs is HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Having one STD increases your chances of contracting another STD, including HIV. AIDS is the leading cause of death for black Floridians between the ages of 25 and 44. HIV does not discriminate against age; 20% of all new infections are found in people over the age of 50.

The Department of Health's STD Awareness Campaign encourages Floridians to use 3T's to prevent the spread of STDs:

Talk: Talk to your partner and your healthcare provider about risk factors, safer sex methods, and testing.

Test: Make an appointment for STD testing.

Treat: Treat the disease and avoid additional health problems.

Contact your nearest Charlotte County Health Department clinic to schedule an appointment for free STD testing. You can reach the Punta Gorda Clinic at 941-639-1181, the Port Charlotte Clinic at 941-624-7200 and the Englewood Clinic at 941-681-3750. Free rapid HIV testing (15 minute testing) will be available the second Monday of each month at the Punta Gorda Clinic. For more information on STD and HIV testing visit www.CharlotteCHD.com.

###



Rick Scott
Governor
