FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gonorrhea on the Rise in North Idaho

HAYDEN, ID - Panhandle Health District (PHD) is alerting the public about an increase of gonorrhea cases in North Idaho. The five northern counties have seen a 115 percent increase in cases so far this year, compared to the same period in 2016. The sexually-transmitted disease (STD) is hitting young people, ages 20 to 29 especially hard.

Gonorrhea has been a growing concern for the last five years in North Idaho, but 2017 has shown the most significant increase to date. PHD Epidemiologists are concerned about the rapidly rising trend and are encouraging all sexually-active individuals to get tested.

“Case investigations point to several causes, including online dating, limited sex education and unprotected sex,” Jeff Lee, PHD Epidemiologist explained. “There is not a single factor that attributes to the increase, but we do know that getting tested on a regular basis and using protection can help reverse the trend and improve community health.”

Gonorrhea, like many sexually transmitted diseases, often produce no symptoms. Gonorrhea is currently treatable with a short course of antibiotics. However, some types of the disease are developing resistance to traditional antibiotics. Left untreated, gonorrhea can cause severe and permanent health issues, such as pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy, and infertility.

PHD offers confidential STD testing and free condoms at all Care Plus clinics in Hayden, Sandpoint, Kellogg, Bonners Ferry and St. Maries. It is recommended that all sexually-active individuals get screened for STDs at least once a year. Those with multiple or anonymous partners should be screened more frequently.

To get an STD test - whether for gonorrhea or any other STD – contact your primary care provider or the Care Plus clinic at your local Panhandle Health District office.

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