

# CITY OF BALTIMORE

MARTIN O'MALLEY, Mayor



## HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner  
210 Guilford Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21202

*CONTACT: Ingrid Wells*

*PHONE: 443-984-2623*

[Ingrid.wells@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Ingrid.wells@baltimorecity.gov)

### **Baltimore City Health Department Reports Declines in Sexually Transmitted Diseases**

**BALTIMORE, MD (May 22, 2006)**— The Baltimore City Health Department is releasing 2005 data on rates of gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis in the city. The data show improvement in all three areas.

“All the tools of public health – including education, screening, active case-finding and treatment – have contributed to reducing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in our community,” said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health. “We must continue this progress to achieve our goals of further reducing gonorrhea and chlamydia and eliminating syphilis and congenital syphilis.”

Reported rates of gonorrhea have declined substantially in Baltimore over the past decade, from 1,002 reported cases per 100,000 population in 1995 to 548 reported cases per 100,000 population in 2005 – a decrease of 45%. The rate declined 11% from 2004. Over the last five years that data are available, Baltimore's reduction in gonorrhea (27%) is more than double the overall national decline (12%).

An examination of chlamydia rates in City-funded non-profit and public clinics indicates that the rate of chlamydia in high-risk populations is decreasing. The rate of positive tests declined from 9.1% in 2002 to 7.3% in 2005 – a drop of 20%.

The rate of syphilis in Baltimore decreased from a high of 101.8 per 100,000 population in 1997 to 30.8 per 100,000 population in 2005. The number of cases of congenital syphilis rose slightly in 2005 to 12 cases. Baltimore City counts cases of congenital syphilis on the basis of laboratory tests irrespective of clinical symptoms of disease.

Chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis have serious health implications if not treated. With chlamydia and gonorrhea, the consequences are most severe in women. Gonorrhea and chlamydia can lead to chronic pelvic pain, infertility and ectopic pregnancy. In both men and women, untreated syphilis can cause paralysis, blindness, dementia and even death. In addition, syphilis may be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy with potentially lethal implications for the infant. All three sexually transmitted infections increase the likelihood of HIV transmission.

The Health Department's fact sheet describing trends in sexually transmitted infections in Baltimore will be available on the Baltimore City Health Department website.

The Health Department runs two free clinics to evaluate and treat sexually transmitted diseases. One is located at 1515 W. North Avenue. The other is at 620 N. Caroline Street. City residents may call 410-396-0186 or 410-396-9401 for information about available services.

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