

Lee County Health Department

309 South Galena Avenue, Suite 100

Dixon, Illinois 61021

(815) 284-3371

www.lchd.com

HIV, OTHER STD TESTS OFFERED AT HEALTH CLINIC

Disease prevention and control are cornerstones of public health. Disease screening is one of the most basic tools of modern public health and preventive medicine. Screening programs have a long history in efforts to control infectious diseases. The Lee County Health Department has a Communicable Disease program which provides a variety of services including testing, treatment, referral, contact tracing and education for Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) cases; and testing, partner tracing, referrals, and education for HIV/AIDS. Not only do these programs identify individuals who have an infectious disease, but secondary prevention often occurs through the treatment and education of the individual, which can prevent the further spread of the infection to others.

The health department has been providing STD testing for females through our family planning clinics for quite some time. Last year, STD testing services were expanded to include males. Brand new to the department is urine testing for gonorrhea and chlamydia (chlamydia is the most commonly occurring STD). Urine tests will be used mainly for our male clients; however some females may meet the criteria for testing. We are hoping this new method of testing will encourage individuals who think they may have been exposed to be tested. Other STDs require various methods of testing – the urine test is specific to gonorrhea and chlamydia. One of the reasons chlamydia is the most commonly occurring STD, is that it often causes no visible symptoms. Men or women can be infected and not be aware of this because they may not experience any discomfort. This leads to an increased risk of passing it to a partner. Any individual who thinks he or she may have been exposed to any STD is encouraged to seek testing. Untreated STDs can lead to severe problems over time.

Another service offered by the Lee County Health Department is HIV testing. We offer anonymous tests for HIV (the virus that causes AIDS). We use the OraSure oral test method. This test involves placing a cotton swab between the cheek and the gum in the mouth. This test extracts antibodies from the blood vessels of the mucous membranes in the mouth, and is not a saliva test. You may wonder how this test can detect HIV in the mouth if HIV can't be transmitted through saliva and kissing. OraSure does not use saliva. It absorbs antibodies directly from the blood vessels in the mucous membranes. This test should appeal to clients, as it removes the need for using a needle to collect the sample. Clients obtaining HIV tests must return a week later to receive the results.

There is a small fee for STD and HIV tests which varies depending on age and county of residence. Call the department for specific fee information. HIV testing is anonymous – you do not give us your name, we track you and your sample with a code number. STD testing requires a name, however it is completely confidential. Both types of testing require appointments – call

the department at 284-3371. Treatment is provided for positive STD tests and referrals are made for positive HIV tests.

Don't hesitate to be tested if you think you may have been exposed. We are here to help. Our department is a safe, confidential and nonjudgmental place to come for information, testing, treatment and risk reduction education and supplies.

-Submitted by Cathy Ferguson, MPH, Public Health Administrator