Teen Sexual Health in California

What It Is
On kidsdata.org, indicators of teen sexual health include the number and rate of reported cases of chlamydia and gonorrhea among young people ages 10-19, at the county level overall, by age group, by gender, and by race/ethnicity. Also available are state-level estimates of the percentage of teens ages 14-17 who have not had sex.

Why This Topic Is Important
Sexual health is a critical component of overall teen health and is influenced by complex factors including biology, socioeconomics, community environments, relationships with family and peers, and access to health care and education. While sexuality is a normal part of adolescent development, sexual activity can have serious consequences, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancy. It is estimated that although young people ages 15-24 represent about 25% of the sexually active population in the U.S., they account for 50% of the nearly 20 million new STI cases each year. Estimates also indicate that one in four sexually active adolescent females has an STI.

Among infectious diseases that must be reported to the U.S. government, chlamydia and gonorrhea are the most common, with young people (ages 15-24) having the highest rates of infection when compared with other age groups. Nationwide, African American/black youth experience especially high rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea; in 2017, black youth ages 15-19 were diagnosed with chlamydia at more than five times the rate for white youth of the same age, and with gonorrhea at more than 11 times the rate of their white peers.

Chlamydia and gonorrhea infections are often asymptomatic, particularly in women, so regular screenings are critical in order to provide timely treatment and to reduce disease transmission. If untreated, chlamydia and gonorrhea can lead to chronic pain, pelvic inflammatory disease, infertility, and adverse reproductive outcomes.

STIs also have serious economic consequences. In 2013, the CDC estimated that, overall, STIs cost the U.S. health care system about $16 billion annually.

How Children Are Faring
According to 2015-16 estimates, 81% of California teens ages 14-17 had never had sex. Young people who engage in sexual activity
### Chlamydia and Gonorrhea Infections Among Youth, by Gender: 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Chlamydia</th>
<th>Gonorrhea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1,218.1</td>
<td>166.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>325.8</td>
<td>110.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Definition:** Number of reported cases of chlamydia and gonorrhea per 100,000 youth ages 10-19, by gender (e.g., in 2017, there were 1,218.1 chlamydia infections per 100,000 female youth in California).


May be at risk for sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia and gonorrhea; in 2017, 48,472 cases of chlamydia and gonorrhea were reported among California youth ages 10-19. Statewide, youth chlamydia and gonorrhea rates have fluctuated since 2000 but have increased overall, from 635 cases of chlamydia per 100,000 youth ages 10-19 in 2000 to 763 per 100,000 youth in 2017, and from 98 cases of gonorrhea per 100,000 youth in 2000 to 138 per 100,000 in 2017. In California and across most counties, data from 2017 and previous years show that female youth are diagnosed with chlamydia and gonorrhea at higher rates than their male counterparts. Although teens ages 15-19 account for the vast majority of chlamydia and gonorrhea cases among youth in California, there also were 850 cases involving children ages 10-14 in 2017.

**View references for this text and additional research on this topic:**