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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **GET TESTED FOR SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES BEFORE YOU GET PREGNANT**

If you're waiting for a train in Ossining or for a job at a day laborer site in Mamaroneck on Thursday, you could be handed a brochure on correct condom use, a preconception health checklist or other tips about preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

This week, Health Department workers will put this vital health information into the hands of adults in several communities throughout the County.

The Westchester County Health Department also is reminding residents that it provides free STD and HIV testing at its district offices in White Plains, Yonkers and New Rochelle. No appointments are needed and clients are seen on a first-come, first-served basis. For more information, please call (914) 813-5000 or go to [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).

These outreach efforts are to support the second annual Community Health Education Day, which takes place on Thursday and was designated by the Lower Hudson Valley Perinatal Network. This year's focus is "Sexually Transmitted Diseases from a Preconception Health Perspective."

"STDs in a pregnant woman can increase the risk to her fetus of low birth weight, premature labor, birth defects and other health problems," said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, commissioner of the Westchester County Health Department. "To give babies a healthy start, women of child-bearing age and men should be regularly tested for sexually transmitted diseases. Women should seek prenatal care as soon as they suspect they are pregnant."

Chlamydia cases went up by 57 percent in Westchester in the past five years, to 2,464 in 2007, up from 1,569 in 2003. Nationwide, 19 million new sexually transmitted infections occur each year among all age groups, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**MORE**

To help county residents get the information they need to give birth to healthy babies, the Westchester County Health Department will distribute information all week about preconception health with a focus on sexually transmitted diseases.

Staffers will provide it to pregnant and parenting women at WIC offices in White Plains, Yonkers and Port Chester, to adults and seniors at a health and wellness forum at the County Center and to women at the Mamapalooza festival at the Kensico Dam in Valhalla. Public health nurses also will distribute information during home visits. Health educators also will give age-appropriate materials to middle and high schoolers through existing peer education programs in Mount Vernon and Yonkers. Similar activities will go on in Rockland, Dutchess and Putnam counties.

**-30-**