

Racial and Ethnic Disparity

Certain racial and ethnic group populations, such as African American, Hispanic, and American Indian, have higher rates of STDs in comparison to whites. This is correlated to disparities faced by these groups, like poverty and limited access to health care.

Poverty and Marginalization

STDs disproportionately affect disadvantaged people and those in social networks where high-risk sexual behavior is common, and either access to care or health-seeking behavior is compromised.

Access to Health Care

Access to high-quality health care is essential for early detection, treatment, and behavior-change counseling for STDs. Groups with the highest rates of STDs are often the same groups for whom access to or use of health services is most limited.

Substance Abuse

The introduction of new illicit substances into communities often can alter sexual behavior drastically in high-risk sexual networks, leading to the epidemic spread of STDs.

Sexuality and Secrecy

The stigma associated with STDs and the general discomfort of discussing intimate aspects of life, especially those related to sex contributes greatly to the spread of STDs. These social factors separate the United States from industrialized countries with low rates of STDs.

Sexual Network

Sexual networks are groups of people who are connected by current or previous partners. A person may have only 1 sex partner, but if that partner is a member of a risky sexual network, then the person is at higher risk for STDs than a similar individual from a lower-risk network

Gender Disparity

People with vaginas suffer more frequent and more serious STD complications than those with penises do. Among the most serious STD complications are pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy outside of the uterus), infertility, and chronic pelvic pain.

Age Disparity

Young people ages 15 to 24 account for half of all new STDs, although they represent just 25% of the sexually experienced population. Adolescent's with cervixes may have increased susceptibility to infection because of increased cervical ectopy.

Asymptomatic Nature of STDs

The majority of STDs either do not produce any symptoms or signs, or they produce symptoms so mild that they are unnoticed; consequently, many infected persons do not know that they need medical care.