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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Fall Illnesses to Watch For - STIs on the Rise, RSV Cases Spike**

*RSV can masquerade as COVID*

**HOUSTON, TX – (Sept. 6, 2023)** – Per the [Houston Health Department](#), sexually transmitted infections (STI) are on the rise in the Houston area. Statistics from the department indicate new syphilis infections rose by a 57 percent increase. Additionally, as summer comes to an end, experts warn not to ignore that cough. Symptoms of a respiratory illness could be RSV or the Respiratory Syncytial Virus, which might look like the flu or COVID. As hospitals and clinics prepare for flu season, it's crucial to get tested.

“Right now, we are seeing an increase in chlamydia, gonorrhea and syphilis,” says Dr. Vandana Shrikanth, infectious disease clinician at Legacy Community Health. “Everyone should be tested regularly so that infections are caught early, before they cause disease. When untreated, an STI can cause infertility, pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy, and infant morbidity and mortality. Syphilis can also affect other organs such as the liver, heart, eyes, ears, and brain. ”

Dr. Shrikanth adds, “Early detection also prevents transmission to others and helps maintain low levels in the community. It is a known fact that untreated chlamydia, gonorrhea, or syphilis infections can increase the probability of HIV transmission.”

An STI may present as burning during urination; pain during intercourse; vaginal, penile or rectal bleeding, discharge or a sore; or a skin rash.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported an increase in RSV activity spreading north and west over the following 2–3 months. About 2 million doctor visits and 80,000 hospitalizations are attributed to RSV in young kids.

RSV in adults usually causes upper respiratory symptoms such as runny nose, cough and/or conjunctivitis. In older adults (especially those who are immunocompromised) it may cause lower respiratory tract infections and present as pneumonia, bronchitis and worsening of asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

According to Dr. Shrikanth, RSV can spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Vaccines can offer protection. The RSV vaccine protects against lower respiratory illness caused by the virus, which usually causes infections around October to November and April to May. Furthermore, the CDC recommends adults 60 years and older receive a single dose of RSV vaccine. The RSV vaccine can be administered along with the annual flu and other vaccines.

There are also vaccines for many STIs, including the HPV vaccine series and vaccines for hepatitis A and B. PrEP can be used to prevent HIV infection; condoms are an effective method of protection for most STIs. If sexually active, get tested regularly and inform all sexual partners of an infection right away.

If you're feeling ill or have a question regarding vaccines, call Legacy Community Health today, 832.548.5000 or visit [legacycommunityhealth.org](https://www.legacycommunityhealth.org)

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**About Legacy Community Health Services, Inc.:**

Legacy Community Health is a full-service health care system comprised of over 50 locations in the Texas Gulf Coast region offering primary and specialty care, as well as pharmacy services. For over 40 years, Legacy has been innovating the ways we provide comprehensive, quality health care services to underserved communities. As the largest Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) in Texas and a United Way affiliated agency since 1990, Legacy ensures its services and programs are open to all, regardless of the ability to pay—without judgment or exception. To learn more, visit [www.legacycommunityhealth.org](https://www.legacycommunityhealth.org).