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Free at-home STD testing kits now available to Alaskans

Alaska had the highest chlamydia rate in the country in 2010, and the second highest rate of gonorrhea. Alaska has consistently had the first or second highest rates of chlamydia since 2000. The “I Want the Kit” at-home testing (IWTK) service is arriving to help reduce those numbers.

Each home test kit comes in an anonymous envelope with instructions, a unique identification number, and a prepaid return envelope to return self-collected vaginal, penile or rectal swabs in specially sealed test tubes to the IWTK lab at Johns Hopkins University. The lab tests the swabs for chlamydia, gonorrhea and trichomonas. The kits are provided through a partnership between the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC), the Indian Health Service (IHS), and John Hopkins University. They are available for anyone residing in Alaska.

“This has been a collective endeavor amongst tribal, state and federal health organizations in an effort to curb Alaska’s endemic rates of chlamydia and outbreak of gonorrhea,” said Connie Jessen, ANTHC STD program manager. “We hope this at-home testing initiative will provide a viable addition to the currently available STD testing services in Alaska.”

The “I Want the Kit” program was launched in Baltimore in 2004 by John Hopkins University. The Hopkins group originally designed the website www.iwantthekit.org to track new and recurrent infections by providing private, confidential testing for Chlamydia trachomatis, Neisseria gonorrhoeae and Trichomonas vaginalis. The kits are now available by phone or online in Alaska and the lower 48. .

“Infectious disease experts at Johns Hopkins say research clearly shows that screening teens and young adults, who otherwise would not come into any clinic, for sexually transmitted infections may best be achieved by making free, confidential home-kit testing available over the Internet, “ said Brenna Simons, ANTHC medical research associate. “From a public health standpoint, we hope this project reduces barriers to testing and care.”

The kits are mailed back in plain, brown paper envelopes with basic contact information. Within two weeks of sending the test to the lab, people can call a toll-free number at ANTHC or elect to receive an email or phone call from a nurse to receive their test results.

Alaskans can request the at-home testing kits online at www.iknowmine.org or www.iwantthekit.org, or by calling (866) 575-5504. Those who test positive for chlamydia, gonorrhea, or trichomonas will be contacted with various options for treatment. The tests are done in a qualified laboratory at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore using standard FDA-cleared state-of-the-art molecular tests and equipment. The testing is confidential, but positive test results will be reported to the State of Alaska as required by law. Alaskans who have questions can call ANTHC’s HIV/STD Program Services at 877-334-8762.

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Alaska Native
Tribal Health Consortium

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About iknowmine.org

iknowmine.org is an interactive sexual health website created with and for Alaska youth. On this site, get accurate sexual health information, ask experts questions, order condoms and listen to other youth speak about sexual health issues. www.iknowmine.org is managed by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Community Health Services STD Program with the goal to promote sexual health knowledge.

About the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium is a not-for-profit tribal health organization managed by Alaska Native tribal governments and their regional health organizations. We provide statewide services in specialty medical care; construction of water, sanitation and health facilities; community health and research; information technology and professional recruiting. For more information, please visit www.anthctoday.org