

Los Angeles County Using E-Mail To Notify Sex Partners of People Diagnosed With STDs

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Health officials in Los Angeles County have started using e-mail to notify the sex partners of people diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases as part of a pilot program aimed at reducing STD transmission among people who meet through Internet chat rooms and Web sites, the [AP/Las Vegas Sun](#) reports. Tracking STD cases among people who meet sex partners on the Internet is difficult because partners often remain anonymous and health officials do not have the names and addresses to notify partners who may have been exposed to a disease, according to the *AP/Sun*. "Using e-mail has been a helpful and good alternative when you have otherwise anonymous sex partners," CDC's Dr. Pragna Patel, who published a paper on Thursday in the [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#) on the Los Angeles project, said, adding, "More and more the Internet is serving as a place to meet sex partners and engage in risky behavior." In the case study, Patel and colleagues profiled a man diagnosed with syphilis in 2002 who said he had had 134 sex partners in a six-month period. The Los Angeles County health department sent 111 of the 134 sex partners e-mails alerting them of possible STD exposure, and 25% of his former partners responded by contacting the health department. San Francisco County is believed to be the only other county in the nation to use e-mail to notify individuals when a partner tests positive for an STD, according to the *AP/Sun*. Some other health agencies post prevention messages on Web sites and use regular mail to contact partners that may have been exposed to an STD, according to the *AP/Sun*.

L.A. County AIDS, Syphilis Cases

Curbing the spread of STDs is particularly important in light of preliminary figures released recently by the county's [Department of Health Services](#), which show the first increase in new AIDS cases in a decade, according to the *AP/Sun* (Yee, *AP/Las Vegas Sun*, 2/19). The number of newly diagnosed AIDS cases in the county increased 0.5% between 2001 and 2002 ([Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report](#), 2/19). In addition, the county reported that nearly 25% of the 759 men who have sex with men diagnosed with syphilis had met sex partners on the Internet between 2001 and 2003 (*AP/Las Vegas Sun*, 2/19).