

Half a million Britons were diagnosed with an STI last year - with chlamydia and gonorrhoea leading the way

- **Public Health England said last year there were 448,422 diagnoses in the UK - 5% more than in 2011**
- **46% of infections were chlamydia, gonorrhoea cases rose by 21% increasing fears of antibiotic resistance**

BY Emma Innes

Half a million people were diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection in the UK last year.

Public Health England (PHE), which released the figures, said last year there were 448,422 diagnoses - a rise of five per cent from 2011.

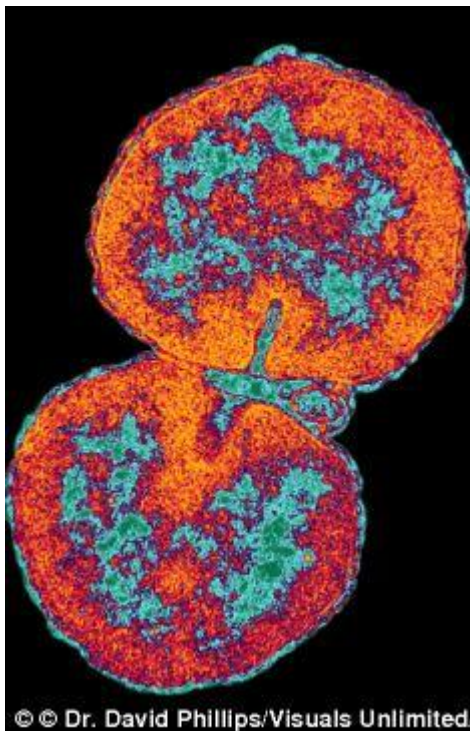
Health officials are warning that the latest rise in the number of diagnoses means too many people are putting themselves at risk through unsafe sex.

Half a million people were diagnosed with an STI in the UK last year and health experts are worried too many people are putting themselves at risk

Almost half of all infections – 46 per cent - were chlamydia, and new gonorrhoea diagnoses rose by 21 per cent. This is a concern for health experts as the global threat of antibiotic resistance grows.

Dr Gwenda Hughes, PHE head of STI surveillance, said: 'There have been significant improvements in screening in recent years, particularly for gonorrhoea and chlamydia among young adults and men who have sex with men, so we are diagnosing and treating more infections than ever before.

'However, these data show too many people are continuing to have unsafe sex, put themselves at risk of STIs and the serious consequences associated with infection, including infertility. 'Ongoing investment in programmes to increase sexual health awareness, condom use and testing, particularly for groups at most risk, is vital.'



New gonorrhoea (pictured) diagnoses rose by 21 per cent, which is concerning health experts as the global threat of antibiotic resistance grows

Those under 25 experienced the highest rates of STIs, contributing 64 per cent of all chlamydia and 54 per cent of all genital warts diagnoses in heterosexuals in 2012.

Dr Hughes said: 'We must also ensure chlamydia screening remains widely available.'

'Local authorities should continue to integrate chlamydia screening into broader health services for young adults.

'This will also help this age group develop positive relationships with services, enabling them to develop and maintain good sexual health throughout their lives.'

Professor Kevin Fenton, PHE director of health and wellbeing, said: 'We are committed to improving the nation's sexual health, with a focus on the groups most at risk, and will provide local authorities and clinical commissioning groups with data on local health needs, coupled with evidence-based advice on STI prevention and sexual health promotion approaches, to improve risk awareness and encourage safer sexual behaviours.'