

**News and Current Events :: Rare infection spreading among homosexuals**

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Atlanta - A rare sexually transmitted disease that is spreading among gay and bisexual men in Europe could be poised to surface in the United States, the US Centres for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention said on Thursday.

The CDC, a federal agency that monitors epidemics and other health threats, urged doctors and clinics across the nation to be prepared to diagnose and treat gay and bisexual men infected with Lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV).

It issued the advice after receiving reports of recent outbreaks in the Netherlands. The northern European nation has uncovered 92 cases of LGV dating back to 2003. It typically sees fewer than five cases per year.

The infection is caused by specific strains of chlamydia, a sexually transmitted disease (STD), and usually marked by genital ulcers, swollen lymph glands and flu-like symptoms.

However most of the men recently infected in the Netherlands developed gastro-intestinal bleeding, inflammation of the rectum and colon and other problems not often associated with the infection or other sexually transmitted diseases.

Belgium, France, Sweden and Britain also have reported infections. It is not known whether America is seeing a similar surge because US doctors are not required to report the infections to local health departments.

"We expect it's a question of time before we see cases appearing here," said Dr Stuart Berman, chief of the epidemiology and surveillance branch in the CDC's division of STD prevention. "This is an early warning."