

Bahrain Reviews Strategy to Contain Syphilis

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Manama - Bahrain is reviewing its strategy for fighting sexually-transmitted diseases after discovering a 0.01 per cent annual increase in syphilis cases, health expert said on Thursday.

Head of National Sexual Transmitted Diseases Programme Dr Somaya Al Jowder told *Khaleej Times* that although syphilis was a curable disease it spread quite easily and could lead to death if was not treated.

She said that a need to review the strategy arose when as many as 286 syphilis cases were reported between January and June of this year, while only 305 cases were discovered in the whole 2007.

The cases were diagnosed during routine tests of 80,285 blood samples from blood banks, besides conducting pre-marriage tests and regular checkup. She said that in all cases patients were advised to get treatment at the earliest.

Dr Somaya Al Jowder said that although the government efforts to fight Aids were being appreciated worldwide, the threat of the rise of sexual transmitted diseases was a matter of concern for health experts.

The main challenge syphilis poses in Bahrain is that it is common among individuals aged from 20 to 39, she said. "The issue could be attributed to the new lifestyle adopted by people in Bahrain as most of them have started visiting foreign destinations and meeting foreigners."

"We are calling upon people to follow certain preventative methods that start with abstinence, to avoid catching the infection," Dr Al Jowder advised.

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