

More over-50s taking sexual health tests put strain on clinics

By Sarah Knapton SCIENCE EDITOR

THE rise in older people getting divorced and finding new partners online could be putting a strain on sexual health clinics, figures suggest.

The number of visits to clinics has risen by 13 per cent in the past four years from 2.9 million appointments a year to 3.3 million.

Tests for chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV have also risen by a

13pc

The rise in the number of visits to sexual health clinics by older people in the past four years, up to 3.3 million a year

fifth. Experts believe the increase is due to reduced stigma surrounding testing, alongside the rise of divorce and internet dating, which has led to more people wanting to get tested.

A recent report by Dame Sally Davies, the chief medical officer, warned that sexually transmitted infections had risen in people aged between 50 and 70 by more than a third since 2005.

The Local Government Association warned: "With capacity and resources already being stretched to the limit, clinics are reporting an increase in the number of lengthy delays and people having to be turned away as appointments are fully booked."

The British Association for Sexual Health and HIV added: "Record demand for services, dramatic increases in syphilis and gonorrhoea diagnoses and the spread of treatment-resistant infection in recent years mean that many services are struggling to cope. Further [government] cuts would almost certainly tip them over the edge."

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