

How Schools Can Support HIV Testing Among Adolescents

WHY SCHOOLS?

1 **SCHOOLS** have direct contact with about

16
MILLION
HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENTS
EVERY DAY¹

during the most critical years of their social, physical, and intellectual development.

2 **SCHOOLS** play a key role in supporting HIV testing among students and linking them to confidential health services.

3 **SCHOOLS** support and promote the health and safety of students and help them establish lifelong healthy behaviors.

Getting tested for HIV is an important step toward prevention; however, testing rates among high school students are low. Schools are important partners in supporting HIV testing among adolescents. Because schools reach millions of students in grades 9–12 every day, they are in a unique position to help educate students about HIV and link them to confidential health services that include HIV testing, counseling, and treatment.

Why should adolescents get tested for HIV?

Many adolescents engage in behaviors that put them at risk for getting HIV. Compared to other age groups, adolescents are among those least likely to know whether they have HIV. CDC recommends HIV testing for adolescents.^{2,3} It is important for adolescents to know their HIV status so they can take precautions to protect their

health or take medicine to treat HIV if they have the virus. Taking HIV medicine every day can make the viral load (the amount of HIV in the blood) undetectable. Adolescents who get and keep an undetectable viral load have effectively no risk of transmitting HIV, and they also experience better health.

Many youth in the U.S. are living with HIV...

19% of all new HIV diagnoses are in young people aged 13–24⁴

88% of new HIV diagnoses are among young men, most of whom are gay or bisexual⁴

But often do not know their status...

Around **44%** of young people with HIV do not know they have the virus⁵

Only **5%** of heterosexual high school students have ever been tested for HIV⁶

Only **7%** of LGBTQ+ students have ever been tested for HIV⁶



MORE INFORMATION

GYT: Get Yourself Tested Campaign for High Schools
www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/get_yourself_tested

CDC's GetTested Locator Tool
gettested.cdc.gov

CDC Resources on Health Services for Teens
www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/healthservices

CDC's Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT)
www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/hecat

Students who are **TAUGHT ABOUT HIV IN SCHOOLS** are more likely to be tested for HIV.



Many students engage in behaviors that put them at risk...

48% of sexually active high school students did not use a condom the last time they had sex⁶

21% of sexually active high school students used alcohol or drugs before they last had sex⁷



How can schools encourage students to get tested for HIV?

1 Access and use health risk behavior data.

- Access Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data on national, state, and local trends in HIV testing, STD testing, and health risk behaviors and experiences among high school students.
- Use surveillance data to create school programs, policies, and practices.

2 Teach students about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

- Educate students about HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, to support their likelihood of being tested.
- Enhance HIV prevention curricula by including information on locations and procedures for obtaining free or low-cost confidential testing and other health services.

3 Connect students with health services that include HIV testing, counseling, and treatment.

- Increase awareness of student sexual health needs by providing medically accurate information to district and school staff, community partners, parents, and families.
- Raise student awareness of the need for and availability of health services.
- Establish a referral system that helps link students to youth-friendly healthcare providers.

4 Encourage students and their families to talk about HIV.

- Provide families with information and skills they need to support healthy attitudes, behaviors, and environments.
- Help families identify unique opportunities to have conversations with their students.

References

- ¹ *Digest of Education Statistics*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics; 2022. Accessed May 4, 2023.
- ² CDC. *Revised recommendations for HIV testing of adults, adolescents, and pregnant women in health-care settings*. *MMWR* 2006;55(RR-14):1-24.
- ³ U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. *Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) Infection: Screening*. June 2019.
- ⁴ CDC. *Diagnoses of HIV infection in the United States and dependent areas, 2021*. *HIV Surveillance Report* 2023;34.
- ⁵ CDC. *Estimated HIV incidence and prevalence in the United States 2017–2021*. *HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report* 2023;28(3).
- ⁶ CDC. *Youth Risk Behavior Survey: Data Summary & Trends Report 2011–2021*. Published April 2023. Accessed May 4, 2023.
- ⁷ CDC. *YRBS Explorer: Explore Youth Risk Behavior Survey Questions—United States, 2021*. Retrieved May 4, 2023.