3 Reasons Gay Teen Boys Don’t Get Tested for HIV

August 26, 2015

HIV rates are increasing among young men who have sex with men (MSM), but only one in five gay male teenagers have been tested for the virus, according to findings of a study by Northwestern University and the Center for Innovative Public Health Research.

The study, published in the Journal of Adolescent Health, notes that the main challenges to these teenagers getting tested include not knowing where to get an HIV test and not wanting to be seen going into the testing site. To a lesser extent, another reason they didn’t get tested is related to the fact that younger people tend to think they’re invincible and simply will not contact the virus.

The barriers are important to understand so that they can be overcome, said the study’s first author, Gregory Phillips II, PhD, in a Northwestern press release.

Possible solutions to these barriers include using text messages and websites to help the young men find testing sites. Offering HIV testing in schools would also normalize the process and make it appear less stigmatizing, the authors write.

The study enrolled a “national sample of 302 gay, bisexual and queer males ages 14 to 18 years into a text messaging-based HIV prevention program (Guy2Guy),” according to the press release. The study included questions about HIV testing.

Although only 20 percent of the respondents had been tested, this compares with 75 percent of 18- and 19-year-olds who, in a 2008 CDC study, reported they had been tested for HIV.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/gay-teens-testing-27679-7058