

## NEW JERSEY AIDS/HIV/STD HOTLINE

### **PRESS RELEASE**

August 2016

## Consequences of Reckless Partying - College Students at Risk -

**Newark, NJ** – Although college students embrace their independence from their parents/guardians, many find themselves in an environment where reckless decision-making becomes a daily activity. Along with studying, exams and papers comes parties, drugs/alcohol and sex. According to the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality's (CBHSQ) Short Report on the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, "More than one-third of full-time college students aged 18 to 22 engaged in binge drinking in the past month; about 1 in 5 used an illicit drug in the past month."<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, participating in risky behaviors can lead to unwanted consequences like overdose, pregnancy and/or contracting an STI (sexually transmitted infection).

The healthcare professionals at the New Jersey AIDS/HIV/STD hotline are calling attention to this public health concern. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Half of the nearly 20 million new STDs reported each year were among young people, between the ages of 15 to 24."<sup>2</sup> Students need to be reminded of the potentially dangerous health risks of having unprotected sex.

An STI (which includes HIV), is an infection spread from person to person through shared bodily fluids during vaginal, anal or oral sex – and sometimes by genital touching. Anyone can be infected by having unprotected sex with an infected partner, even if it is your first time. A person is at risk if he/she has ever been or is currently sexually active. The appropriate use of latex condoms (male and female) significantly decreases one's risk of become infected with an STI if used consistently and correctly every time a sexual act occurs.

CDC statistics on HIV and young people<sup>3</sup>

- Young people (aged 13-24) accounted for an estimated 22% of all new HIV diagnoses in the United States in 2014.
- Among young people (aged 13-24) diagnosed with HIV in 2014, 80% were gay and bisexual males.

Easy access to alcohol and drugs (prescription, over-the-counter and illegal) creates the "perfect storm" for lowering inhibitions and engaging in high risk sexual behavior. Remember, drinking alcohol or using drugs greatly affects one's decision making ability. The more alcohol one consumes, the more likely he/she is to have unprotected sex with his/her partner. Consuming alcohol while taking other medications can intensify the effects of the medicine and can cause serious health effects, leading to unintentional overdose. In addition, the more alcohol one ingests the more likely he/she is to receive unwanted attention and/or sexual advances from others.

Be aware that the use of emergency contraception like the Morning-After Pill, Plan B, and Ella will not provide protection to women against the spread of STD/STIs and/or HIV. Having unprotected sex may put you at risk for contracting an STD/STI and/or HIV. If you have had unprotected sex and are unsure if you have contracted an infection, experts recommend getting tested immediately.

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<sup>1</sup> SAMHSA. [A Day in the Life of College Students Aged 18 to 22: Substance Use Facts](#). The CBHSQ Report. May 26, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> CDC. [Sexual Risk Behaviors: HIV, STD, and Teen Pregnancy](#). Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH). July 2016

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

The risk of contracting and spreading STDs, HIV and hepatitis must be taken seriously – they do not discriminate. All sexually active individuals are at risk. Not all STIs cause symptoms, and there are some that have no cure, like HIV and herpes. If left untreated, sexually transmitted infections can cause serious health effects from infertility to cancer to death. If you are sexually active, we urge you to learn how to reduce your risk of exposure and get tested. Testing is the ONLY way to know for sure.

Don't wait! Get tested now! The sooner an STI is found, the sooner treatment can begin. Some can be cured while others can only be treated, not cured. Ignoring an STD/STI won't make it go away. Early testing can help find STIs before symptoms show, so treatment can be started as soon as possible; helping to prevent the further spread of infection.

If you are looking to find a free, state-funded testing site near you for initial testing or follow-up or have questions about HIV/AIDS, STDs, or hepatitis, contact us (The New Jersey AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline) either by calling 800-624-2377, text/email at [8006242377@njpies.org](mailto:8006242377@njpies.org), or chat via our site at [www.njhivstdline.org](http://www.njhivstdline.org); TTD/TTY Line (for the hearing impaired) 973-926-8008. We are always here to help 24hours a day/ 7 days a week! Calls are free and confidential. Services include:

- Referrals for testing sites and other related services
- HIV/AIDS, STD and Hepatitis Prevention Information
- Counseling and Treatment Locations
- Treatment Information

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#### **About NJPIES**

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hot line services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Emergency Medicine of the New Jersey Medical School of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hot line, **800-222-1222**, any time. The hearing impaired may call **973-926-8008**. For more information, visit [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org) or call **973-972-9280**.

#### **About Rutgers**

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.