

## NEW JERSEY AIDS/HIV/STD HOTLINE

**PRESS RELEASE**  
September 2019

### **Unintended Consequences of College Life** Reckless Decision-Making Impacts Your Health

**(Newark, NJ)** – College is a time for young adults to embrace their independence, explore academic and social interests, and learn to navigate an environment filled with impulsive and often reckless decision-making. Many will experiment with alcohol and other drugs as well as their sexuality. Unfortunately, this type of experimentation can come at a price. High-risk behaviors can lead to unintended consequences – some even affecting a person’s health for a lifetime. For example, drug misuse/abuse, drug overdose, unplanned pregnancy, getting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) including HIV, or sexual assault. \*

What College Students Need to Know to Protect Their Sexual Health:

- Young adults are at high risk of getting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and hepatitis. Of the approximately 20 million new STI cases diagnosed each year in the United States — young adults aged 15-24 account for half of these new infections.<sup>1</sup>
- Condoms (male or female) are an effective way to prevent HIV, other STIs, and pregnancy. They do not eliminate risk; the only sure way to eliminate risk is to not have sex. To achieve the maximum protective effect, condoms must be used the right way every time — from start to finish. Always wear a new condom for every act of vaginal, anal, and/or oral sex.
- Birth control and emergency contraception (i.e. Plan B, ella) only prevent pregnancy — they do not protect against HIV or other STIs. If you had unprotected sex (no condom) or the condom (male or female) broke during sex, speak to your healthcare provider right away about emergency contraception and/or STI and HIV prophylaxis (prevention).
- Being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs lowers inhibitions and greatly affects one’s decision making ability — increasing the likelihood of engaging in high risk behaviors such as having unprotected sex (no condom), sharing injection drugs, having many sex partners, having sex with a high-risk partner, exchange of sex (sex work) for drugs or money, etc. These behaviors greatly increase one’s risk for getting and spreading HIV and other STIs including viral hepatitis.

---

\*Drinking too much alcohol or using drugs can make you unaware of what is happening around you and to you. If you have been sexually assaulted, it is not your fault, regardless of the circumstances.

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/sexual-assault-and-rape>

<sup>1</sup> CDC. [Adolescents and Young Adults](#).

- STIs don't discriminate — anyone can be at risk if he/she has ever been or is currently sexually active. Infection can occur by having unprotected sex with someone who has an STI, even if it is the first time being intimate with that partner. Most STIs are spread from person to person through shared body fluids during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Some can also be spread through genital touching and others through injection drug use.
- Get tested regularly for STIs, including HIV. Many people are unaware that they have a sexually transmitted infection because they often have no symptoms. Testing is the only way to be sure of your STI status. Some infections are curable, while others can only be treated. If diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection, get treatment immediately. Be sure to notify your sex partners so they can get tested and receive treatment as well.
- Ignoring an STI will not make it go away. If left untreated, sexually transmitted infections can cause serious health effects from infertility to cancer to death. Having an untreated STI also puts you at high risk for HIV infection.
- HIV is no longer a death sentence. People on antiretroviral therapy (ART) are living longer and healthier than ever before. Although there is no cure for HIV, effective treatment significantly decreases the amount of HIV in the body to an undetectable level, preventing further progression. People living with HIV "who maintain an undetectable viral load have effectively no risk of transmitting HIV to their HIV-negative partner through sex."<sup>2</sup> If you do not know your HIV status, get tested and start HIV treatment immediately, if diagnosed.
  - Testing can also serve as a gateway to prevention services for those who are HIV-negative. [PrEP](#) (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis), also known as Truvada, and [PEP](#) (Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) are HIV medicines taken to prevent HIV infection. These prescribed prevention resources have been proven to significantly reduce HIV infection, if used according to the directions.
- HPV (human papillomavirus) is a common sexually transmitted infection spread through vaginal, anal or oral sex. In fact, "HPV infections are so common that nearly all men and women will get at least one type of HPV at some point in their lives."<sup>3</sup> It is recommended that young adults, both male and female, get vaccinated against HPV to prevent infection and protect against HPV-related cancers later in life. HPV infection is associated with cancers of the cervix, vagina, vulva, penis, anus, and back of the throat.

New Jersey offers free HIV and other STI services to all state residents via the hotline. Knowing who to call for resources and information is the first step in ending the HIV epidemic in New Jersey. The hotline is staffed by health professionals (doctors, nurses, and pharmacists) available 24 hours a day,

---

<sup>2</sup> AIDSinfo. [HIV Treatment: The Basics](#)

<sup>3</sup> CDC. [About HPV](#)

7 days a week to provide free, confidential help via phone at 1-800-624-2377, text/email at [8006242377@njpies.org](mailto:8006242377@njpies.org), or [chat here](#)

- Referrals for testing sites and other related services
- HIV, STI and hepatitis prevention and treatment information
- Side effects from medicines used to treat HIV and other sexually transmitted infections
- Referrals to PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) and PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) services
- Counseling and treatment locations
- Partner notification
- ADDP

Connect with us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

---

### **New Jersey AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline**

Healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses and pharmacists) provide telephone consultation for people seeking information about HIV/AIDS, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and other sexually transmitted infections (STI) including hepatitis. Callers receive information tailored to their needs; discussion about prevention, referrals for testing sites and other related services, counseling and testing locations, and information on treatment and adverse reactions to medications. The hotline is administered by the New Jersey Poison Control Center and funded by the New Jersey Department of Health, Division of HIV, STD, and TB services.

### **Rutgers New Jersey Medical School**

Founded in 1954, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School is the oldest school of medicine in the state. Today it is part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and graduates approximately 170 physicians a year. In addition to providing the MD degree, the school offers MD/PhD, MD/MPH and MD/MBA degrees through collaborations with other institutions of higher education. Dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care and community outreach, the medical school comprises 20 academic departments and works with several healthcare partners, including its principal teaching hospital, University Hospital. Its faculty consists of numerous world-renowned scientists and many of the region's "top doctors." Home to the nation's oldest student-run clinic, New Jersey Medical School hosts more than 50 centers and institutes, including the Public Health Research Institute Center, the Global Tuberculosis Institute and the Neurological Institute of New Jersey. For more information please visit: [njms.rutgers.edu](http://njms.rutgers.edu).

###