

Feasibility of Continuous HIV Testing as an HIV Prevention Strategy among Sexually Active Adolescents and Young People

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Background: This study aimed to investigate the feasibility of continuous HIV testing as a strategy for preventing and reducing HIV transmission among sexually active adolescents and young people. While it is recommended to regularly test for HIV to ensure early detection and access to appropriate healthcare services, there is limited population-based data on HIV testing prevalence among adolescents. By incorporating the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, we aimed to provide generalizable estimates of HIV testing among sexually active adolescents and young people.

Intervention Description: Prevalence estimates of HIV testing (excluding HIV STI/TB) within the past 18 months were conducted among a sample of sexually active adolescents and young people (n = 157). Bivariate associations between testing and demographic characteristics (sex, age, race and ethnicity, sexual identity, and sex of sexual contact) were analyzed. Multivariable models, stratified by sex and adjusted for demographics, examined the relationships between testing and sexual behaviors (age of initiation, number of sex partners, condom non-use at last sexual intercourse, and substance use at last sexual intercourse).

Results: The findings revealed that 31% of sexually active adolescents and young people reported testing for HIV in the previous year. Notably, a significantly higher proportion of females (43%) than males (9%) reported undergoing testing. Among adolescent and young women, the prevalence of testing varied by age, with rates of 11% for those aged ≤ 18 years, 13.8% for age 20, 33% for age 22, and 45% for those ≥ 18 years. For adolescent boys and young men, there were no significant differences in testing prevalence based on demographic characteristics, including sexual identity. However, various sexual risk behaviors were associated with an increased likelihood of HIV testing.

Lessons Learned: The low prevalence of HIV testing suggests suboptimal adherence to continuous testing recommendations, particularly among sexually active adolescents and young people.

Key message: Continuous HIV testing among sexually active adolescents and young people is crucial for early detection and access to appropriate healthcare services.

Advocacy message: Increase awareness and promote regular HIV testing among sexually active adolescents and young people to prevent and reduce the transmission of HIV.

Keywords: continuous HIV testing, sexually active adolescents, young people, prevalence, adherence, sexual risk behaviors.