

Distribution of self-test kits can up HIV awareness

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(HealthDay)—Distribution of HIV self-tests among men who have sex

with men (MSM) can increase testing and newly identified infections, according to a study published online Nov. 18 in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Robin J. MacGowan, M.P.H., from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, and colleagues conducted a 12-month study involving MSM who reported engaging in [anal sex](#) with men in the past year and who never tested positive for HIV. Participants had access to online web-based HIV testing resources and telephone counseling. Participants were randomly assigned to either the [control group](#) or a [self-testing](#) (ST) group, which received four HIV self-tests, with the option to replenish self-tests.

The researchers found that more ST than control participants reported testing three or more times during the trial (76.6 percent of 1,014 ST participants versus 22.0 percent of 977 control participants). Compared with [control participants](#), ST participants had a higher cumulative number of newly identified infections during the trial (1.9 versus 0.8 percent), with the largest difference seen in the first three months (0.9 versus 0.1 percent). Thirty-four newly identified infections were reported by ST participants among social network members who used the self-tests.

"Based on these findings, HIV prevention programs might consider adding an HIV self-testing mail distribution component to their portfolio of HIV prevention services for high-risk populations and providing high-risk MSM additional kits to promote distribution to social network members," the authors write.

One author disclosed financial ties to the publishing industry.

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