



ECDC **GUIDANCE**

HIV testing: increasing uptake and effectiveness in the European Union

2.4 How to test?

Raise public awareness

To seek and accept HIV testing, the public, and especially groups at higher risk of HIV, need to understand its benefits. **A strategic approach to communication is needed**, using a range of different channels. Visible and high-level support from opinion formers, including politicians, community leaders and celebrities, and supportive and accurate coverage in the media, can all be used to raise awareness.

Ensuring that accurate information is available about HIV, its transmission routes, its prognosis and how treatments affect it, should be part of a national HIV testing strategy. A range of communication channels should be used, including local healthcare professionals and community-based organisations as well as traditional and electronic media, and communication strategies should be adopted to reach the most-at-risk populations [75]. Such interventions need to be tailored to needs and culturally appropriate for their target audiences.

Responsible media reporting of HIV should be promoted and, where possible, people in the public eye can assist in preparing the public to consider the benefits of testing for HIV. It is also useful to consider implementing targeted public awareness campaigns aimed at populations most at risk of HIV [36,75,76].

Information efforts need to be maintained over time in order to have a sustained impact as, although short-term media campaigns have resulted in significant immediate increases in HIV testing, a sustained impact is not achieved once a campaign ends [36].