Young Drug Users at Especially High Risk of HIV and Hep C

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Over half of young injection drug users (IDUs) in the United States share syringes and about four in five report having sex without a condom, putting them at risk of both contracting and transmitting HIV and hepatitis C virus (HCV), HIVandHepatitis reports. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported data on IDUs in the July 4 edition of the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Surveillance Summaries.

The data was gathered as part of the second cycle of the National HIV Behavioral Surveillance System's IDU surveys, which were conducted in 2009. A total of 10,200 people who reported injecting drugs at least once in the past year and who were age 18 and older were polled in 20 urban areas.

All but 10 of the participants provided valid HIV test results, 906 of which (9 percent) were positive. Forty-nine percent of the participants had been tested in the previous year.

Forty-one percent of the participants had tested positive for hep C.

About a third of the participants reported using a needle or syringe after someone else. Fifty-two percent of those between the ages of 18 and 29 reported doing so, making young people the most likely to share receptively and thus put themselves at risk of acquiring HIV or hep C. Fifty-eight percent of all the participants shared "works," including cookers, cotton or water, which can also transmit hepatitis C. Forty-four percent said they had received sterile syringes during the past year, and 41 percent reported receiving other drug injection equipment through syringe exchanges or other harm reduction outfits.

Seventy percent of men and 73 percent of women reported having vaginal intercourse without a condom during the past year. A respective 25 percent and 21 percent said they'd had condomless anal sex. Eighty percent of the male and 89 percent of the female young study participants reported intercourse without a condom.

To read the HIVandHepatitis story, click here.

To read the CDC report, click here.

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