



Address: 5/F, Shaueiwan Jockey Club Clinic, 8 Chai Wan Road, Hong Kong
Tel: (852) 2560 8528 Fax: 852) 2560 4154
Website: <http://www.aids.org.hk/> Email: hkaf@hkaf.com

From: Hong Kong AIDS Foundation

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Double Condom = Double Protection?

HKAF focuses on youth SEX education to combat younger age HIV infections

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) has recently released the latest figures on the HIV/AIDS situation in Hong Kong. A total of 142 additional cases of HIV infection were reported from January to March (1st quarter) of 2018. This figure represents an increase of 3 cases compared with the previous quarter. In total, the cumulative number of HIV infections has reached 9,233 cases.

The infection rate of MSM keeps rising

The Hong Kong AIDS Foundation (the Foundation) is particularly concerned about the HIV infection situation in the homosexual category. 45.8% of the additional cases of HIV infection in the 1st quarter were reported in this category, and this is also 5.5% higher compared to the previous quarter. According to past figures, the men who have sex with men (MSM) group has always been exposed to high risk of HIV infection. Refer to the results of the latest community-based HIV Prevalence and Risk Behavioural Survey of Men who have sex with men (PRiSM), we found that the HIV prevalence for sexually active MSM was 6.54% in 2017 (5.85% in 2014), which means there is one infection case among every 15 MSM. The results of **two consecutive surveys have estimated that the infection rate of this group exceeds 5%**, which is extremely worrying.

Infection rate is higher at a younger age

The Foundation is also very troubled by the decreasing MSM average age of the newly infected cases shown in the recent figures. According to the latest figures, the 40 additional cases of HIV infection contracted through homosexual contacts are found between young communities aged among 20 to 29 years old, more than that of the additional cases aged among 30 to 39 years old (37 cases). Furthermore, the overall figures in 2017 revealed that the total number of additional infection cases in the **age group 20 to 29 outweighed the age group 30 to 39**. This is definitely a strong signal to make the public fully aware of the importance of safe sex education for the younger generation who are now more vulnerable to HIV infection than ever before.



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The MSM community has always been the main target group that the Foundation has been striving to serve. The Foundation has been running the “Man-d Project” for more than 15 years (started in 2003) with the aim to raise awareness of safer sex and introduce HIV prevention measures among the MSM community.

Ms Eris Lau, the Chief Executive of the Foundation feels it is critical to work closely with those in the education sector, “The Foundation has been working closely with primary schools, secondary schools and universities to expand the scope of its outreach education program. It is necessary to enhance young people’s knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention as well as to establish a safe attitude towards sex in order to reduce possible sexual health risks.”

This May, the Foundation was pleased to be invited by the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts to hold a sexual health workshop. Through this workshop, conducted over 3 days, the Foundation was able to interact with more than 300 young people. However, during the workshop, our staff members discovered that many young people still have limited knowledge on HIV/AIDS and condom usage. This can be attributed to insufficient education provided by the Education Bureau and schools. Without appropriate education, young people may take erroneous reference from the Internet or through word of mouth among peers. A university lecturer, who has been volunteering with the Foundation for 19 years and devoting himself to youth sex education, has come across the issue. He remarked that common misunderstandings among young people about using condoms may include concepts such as “use two condoms instead of one is safer” and “condoms have no expiry date”. The Foundation hopes similar workshops can be held more often across campuses to equip young people with sufficient sexual health knowledge and eliminate their misunderstanding towards HIV/AIDS.



Hong Kong AIDS Foundation spreads valuable knowledge about safe sex through the outreach program



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Regular HIV Testing

HIV antibody testing should be considered as part of a regular check-up. The Hong Kong AIDS Foundation is now calling on those who have a history of unsafe sex to contact the Foundation for an HIV antibody test via the channels below. This test should be conducted three months after unprotected sexual exposure / possible HIV exposure, and all tests are free, anonymous and confidential.

- 1) Helpline/WhatsApp: 9093 0335
- 2) Line: HIVTesting
- 3) WeChat: HKAIDSFUNDATION

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About the Hong Kong AIDS Foundation

The Hong Kong AIDS Foundation was established in 1991 and is a non-governmental social service organisation. The Foundation's mission is to limit the spread of HIV infection in the community. Throughout the years, the Foundation has been actively engaged in the promotion of AIDS education, the provision of services, and the nurturing of a harmonious and caring environment for those infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Media Enquires

For media enquiries, please contact Ms. Cathy Ng, Marketing and Publicity Manager of the Hong Kong AIDS Foundation, at 2560 8528 / 6130 5611 or by email to cathyng@hkaf.com; or Ms. Brenda Chan at SPRG, at 2114 4396 / 6108 6048 or by email to brenda.chan@sprg.com.hk.