

American Sexual Health Association  
Media Contact:  
ASHA/NCC Media Relations  
P.O. Box 13827  
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Fred Wyand  
(919) 361-3124 (voice)  
(919) 361-8425 (fax)  
[mediarelations@ashasexualhealth.org](mailto:mediarelations@ashasexualhealth.org)

### **“YES Means TEST” Empowers Sexually Active Young Adults to Get Tested for STDs**

*American Sexual Health Association kicks off STD Awareness Month with an effort to shatter the stigma of STDs, where half of all new infections are in people ages 15-24*

**DATELINE,** April 3, 2017 – Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are on the rise among our nation’s young people. In fact, one in two sexually active people will get an STD by age 25, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Yet a recent study shows that fewer than 12 percent said they were tested in the past year. Today, the American Sexual Health Association (ASHA) launched a stigma-shattering initiative – “YES Means TEST™” – to educate and empower young adults who say “YES” to sexual activity also to say “YES” to getting tested for STDs, also known as sexually transmitted infections.

“YES Means TEST” is launching this month with a video – developed in partnership with media and entertainment company SoulPancake – aimed at normalizing STD testing so young people will view testing as a natural part of saying “YES” to sexual activity. The video will feature comedian/actress, Whitney Cummings, a creator of the hit TV show, “2 Broke Girls.” The initiative will additionally be amplified with online advertising, media efforts and partnerships with advocacy groups to spread the message about getting tested. All activities direct people to [www.YESmeansTEST.org](http://www.YESmeansTEST.org), where they can locate nearby clinics to receive confidential and free or low-cost testing for STIs.

“I get it. STDs carry a stigma among young people, and so many of them ignore the topic because they’re ashamed or afraid of what people will think if they test positive,” Cummings said. “But this generation has become so outspoken about other important topics related to sexuality, so why not STDs? I want to remind people that getting tested for STDs should go hand in hand with making the choice to have sex.”

### **Why Testing Matters Now More Than Ever**

Chlamydia and gonorrhea are most prevalent among young people. STDs can be transmitted by vaginal, oral or anal sex, and even genital skin-to-skin contact can spread some STDs. People may not know they have an STD because many do not have symptoms, which is why testing is so vital. STDs can cause serious health consequences if they are not detected and treated appropriately. For example, chlamydia left untreated can put a woman at risk for pelvic inflammatory disease, a condition that can lead to tubal pregnancy, chronic pain and infertility. “YES Means TEST” was designed primarily to reach women ages 18-24 who are sexually active but do not get STD testing regularly. The CDC recommends annual chlamydia and gonorrhea screenings for this demographic.

“At ASHA, we understand there are plenty of reasons young people aren’t getting tested,” said Lynn Barclay, president and CEO of ASHA. “They’re often in denial about the risk of STDs, aren’t educated about their harmful effects or for some reason are too embarrassed to discuss them. We’ve got to reverse that stigma so people, especially young women, feel empowered to take ownership of their sexual health.”

STD testing can be quick, easy, confidential and free or low-cost, and common STDs, such as chlamydia or gonorrhea, are usually effectively treated with antibiotics. For more information about STDs, “YES Means TEST” or how and where to get tested, please visit [www.YESmeansTEST.org](http://www.YESmeansTEST.org). Join the conversation online with #YESmeansTEST.

### **About SoulPancake**

SoulPancake, now a division of Participant Media, is an award-winning production company and creative agency dedicated to creating meaningful content that explores life’s big questions. With a passionate and engaged audience of over 13 million fans online and beyond, SoulPancake’s mission-based original programming, live events, and branded content celebrate humanity and champion creativity with integrity, heart, and humor. For more, visit [www.soulpancake.com](http://www.soulpancake.com), [www.YouTube.com/SoulPancake](http://www.YouTube.com/SoulPancake), or find us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat via @soulpancake.

### **About ASHA**

The American Sexual Health Association (ASHA) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1914 to improve the health of individuals, families, and communities, with a focus on educating about and preventing sexually transmitted infections. ASHA’s educational web sites include: [www.ashasexualhealth.org](http://www.ashasexualhealth.org), [www.iwannaknow.org](http://www.iwannaknow.org) (teen site), and [www.quierosaber.org](http://www.quierosaber.org) (Spanish language site).

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