

# HEALTH is POWER

Messaging toolkit for  
promoting sexual health  
among African American  
men, ages 18-30 years



*Guided by in-depth research with the target audience at multiple points in the development process, the “Health Is Power” Toolkit is a resource to be used by partner organizations in an effort to improve the sexual health of African-American men aged 18-30 across the country. National and community-based organizations are encouraged to make use of these messages and materials in their own efforts to foster improved sexual health among the men they serve.*

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# HEALTH IS POWER MESSAGE TOOLKIT

The “Health Is Power” toolkit is designed to help African-American-serving organizations serving young African American men (aged 18-30) in the United States (U.S.) work together to promote sexual health among young men, ages 18-30 years. The primary audience is heterosexual men, though gay and bisexual men can be considered as a possible secondary audience. Messages were developed with the input of the target audience and are intended to empower men to adopt healthy sexual habits and relationships, through supportive norms and a positive approach. The toolkit is designed to support a multi-phased campaign, with four waves of implementation, running 2 to 4 weeks each intended to promote (1) increased condom use, (2) healthy relationships (3) Sexually transmitted disease (STD) testing and other sexual health services, and (4) open partner communication. It offers tools to reach men through channels with which they already engage and find credible, including social media networks and community venues.

Messages were developed with the input of the target audience and are intended to empower men to adopt healthy sexual habits and relationships, through supportive norms and a positive approach. Results from a national survey of about 250 African American men (90% heterosexual; 10% gay or bisexual) suggest that the target audience feels this campaign effort is both important and informative for men like them. Concepts and messages successfully caught audience’s attention and performed well on other measures of audience receptivity and engagement. National, local and community-based organizations are encouraged to make use of these messages and materials in their own efforts to foster improved sexual health among the men they serve.

The messaging toolkit aims to meet the following 4 behavioral objectives through a phased approach:

- Phase 1: Increase consistent and correct use of condoms with sex partners
- Phase 2: Increase awareness and perceived value of healthy relationships (honest, respectful monogamous relationships)
- Phase 3: Increase STD testing and utilization of preventive healthcare services
- Phase 4: Increase engagement in open and honest conversations with partners about sexual/relationship desires and expectations, STD testing, and general prevention strategies

With virtually all (96%) young African Americans (ages 18-29 years) using at least one social-networking site, most of the messaging in this toolkit has been geared for dissemination through social media outlets. Although the toolkit is structured to be implemented in four phases, organizations may use the materials in ways that best fit their existing efforts to support men’s health.

The target audience of young African-American men is large and diverse, at different stages in their lives, and motivated by different wants and values. These campaign objectives are intended to appeal to a variety of men (primarily men who have sex with women) through different messages, social media content, and other online content.



## SUGGESTIONS FOR TOOLKIT USE

As an organization touching the lives of African American men, you are a trusted source of information and can play a key role in promoting healthy sexual behaviors and relationships. Organizations that serve African American men in the age range of 18 to 30 are encouraged to utilize this toolkit in addition to or as part of their efforts to improve health and well-being in their communities.

This toolkit is intended for use by organizations including but not limited to:

- Fraternities
- Community health centers
- College/university student or alumni groups
- Community centers
- Fitness centers
- Civic groups
- Online communities
- Other community-based organizations

The messaging campaign should be rolled out in 4 distinct phases, focusing on each of the 4 different behavioral objectives. It is recommended that your organization integrate the 4 messaging phases into your existing communication efforts, running each phase for 2 to 4 weeks over the course of up to one year. Local implementation can be tailored to your organization and audience, based on your organization's priorities and resources. These and other considerations, including the channels and frequency with which you communicate with young African American men, should be taken into account when implementing the toolkit.

Toolkit materials to use in messaging phases include:

- Key messages
- Sexual health and STD information
- Posters and postcards
- Sample Facebook content, including Facebook posts, images, cover images, and profile image
- Sample Tweets
- Web banners
- Sample "Drop-in" website articles

Materials can be customized with your agency's logo and should be accompanied by links to relevant information, resources, services or events of your organization (or that of other trusted organizations). If your (or your partners') agency does not offer these resources, you can refer consumers to other available sexual health resources (see Additional Resources at the end of this toolkit).

According to the Pew Research Center (2014, 2015), African American adults are active on social media, with 67% of them on Facebook, 38% on Instagram, 28% on LinkedIn and 27% on Twitter. Youth (ages 18-29 years) are especially avid consumers of social media, with 87% on Facebook, 53% on Instagram, 37% on Twitter and 23% on LinkedIn. Facebook users tend to be the most engaged with the platform, using it daily or multiple times a day. Trends suggest that Instagram is increasing in popularity among this demographic.

Toolkit messages and images can be adapted for different channels as necessary. Consider that the media landscape is constantly changing, so the most effective channels for reaching your audience may also change.

Finally, if your organization has the resources, you can supplement these messaging tools by offering additional print materials or developing additional social media content.

## CAMPAIGN DURATION

Aim to spread social media messages and utilize other toolkit elements across a period of 4 weeks for each phase, though as few as 2 weeks is also effective. Optimally, your organization will spread phases out over the course of a year (every 3 months) to stay “top of mind” among the men you serve. However, starting a new phase every 2 months will also ensure that messages are reaching the audience over a significant period of time.

### HEALTH IS POWER CAMPAIGN PHASES



### Take advantage of key opportunities to roll out phases

Community-based events, awareness weeks/months, or even related news stories and current events relevant to social media content can offer ideal opportunities to support message dissemination. Here are some ideas about suggested activities you can consider to support your efforts to promote sexual health:

Partner with local health department or community-based organization to offer health screenings

- Health fairs
- Guest speaker events
- Athletic events
- Video, photo or social media contests
- Poetry slams or spoken word contests
- Selfie photo contest
- Art contests
- Other

See the list of observances at the end of this toolkit for opportunities to hold events and disseminate campaign messages.

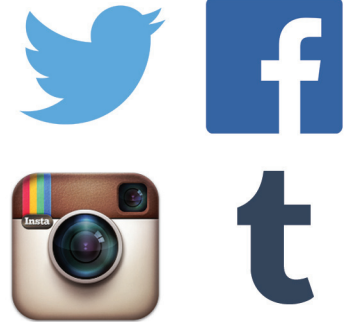
For additional guidance on planning communication campaigns, go to:

<http://npin.cdc.gov/STDAwareness/Planners.aspx>

## Considerations for effectively reaching your audience

Where should you concentrate your resources to implement the Health Is Power campaign? Consider the channels through which you currently reach your audience.

Do you have a web or social media presence? Is your audience active on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr or other social media or smart-phone applications (apps)? Which channels are audiences most engaged in? New and social media channels can offer inexpensive ways to reach audiences from trusted sources. If your organization's website does not have a lot of traffic, think about what other organizations' websites your audience may be visiting, and enlist those organizations to post "drop-in" website articles and direct the audience to your organization's services.



Our national survey suggests that African American men are seeking online information and resources about health, sex and relationships. As many as 70% report reading articles and nearly 60% report searching for information and reading posts or stories from other men on these topics daily, weekly or monthly.

Does your organization interact with a significant number of men face-to-face through direct services, and less so through online and social media channels? You may decide to put more financial resources into printing posters and postcards, for example, or spend more staff time creating additional tweets to complement those found in this toolkit.

Also, consider the demographics of the men your organization serves and determine whether adjustments are needed to campaign phases and whether adapting existing messages or creating new messages would more effectively reach your audience. Key findings from our national survey, with implications for reaching specific audience segments, are noted below:

- **Younger men (ages 18-24)** were more likely to express interest in reading personal stories about sexual health and were particularly interested in learning about condom use and STD prevention, compared to older male audiences (ages 25-30 years). Yet, younger men were also more likely to find the targeting of African-American men with a sexual health campaign to be offensive or stereotyping (although this view was still expressed by a minority of younger men). Younger men were more likely to suggest adding images of other racial/ethnic groups, as well as personal stories or testimonials from other men. This may reflect Millennials' greater identification with diversity ("post-racial" views) and trust in peer-to-peer networks. If your target audience is largely comprised of this younger age segment, consider:
  - Including links to available prevention resources (e.g., free condoms, STD testing)
  - Increasing the racial/ethnic diversity of individuals depicted in images.
  - Developing or linking to content with quotes, testimonials or personal experiences from your audience; or encouraging social media users to share their own stories.
- **Men in lower income and education segments** were more likely to report that they would click on and share certain messages (compared to those in higher income and education segments), suggesting that they may be more receptive to, and engaged in a campaign delivered through social media channels.

- **Gay and bisexual men** responded positively to most messages, though messages that referenced a female partner or pregnancy prevention were less likely to grab their attention and resonate. If you intend to reach gay and bisexual men, it is recommended that you adapt messages to be gender-neutral or specifically reference men, and use appropriate imagery.

*Tip: Low-cost stock photography can be found at a number of online sources; small “royalty-free” photo files (for use on the web, in social media, or smaller print projects) can be found for just a few dollars.*

- **Region:** Respondents in the South rated messages using slang (accompanied by images of a single man) as more attention getting than did men in the West.

*Use language that is familiar and accessible to your audience, avoiding excessive use of slang.*

- **Single men** indicated more interest in content addressing condom use, whereas men in relationships indicated more interest in content about keeping things hot.

*Consider the interests of your audience when selecting messages to reach them most effectively.*

### Sources

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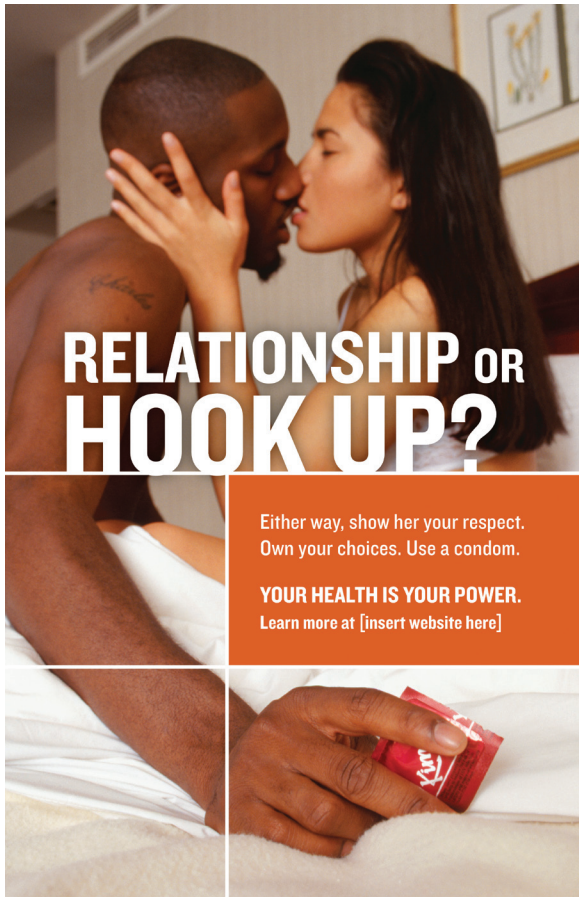
## POSTERS AND POSTCARDS

Posters and postcards are provided for printing either commercially\* or in-house. Posters can be used at your organization’s site and/or distributed to satellite sites, affiliates or other organizations you may work with. Postcards can be distributed as is, used for notes and reminders for clients, or printed with your own organizational information or message in the blank area.

Ideally, posters and postcards should be distributed and posted to coincide with the social media and web promotions. However, what is most important is simply ensuring that they are used and seen over a period of time. For posters, be sure to rotate them at each location they’re posted, and do not “cluster” multiple posters in one location. Aim for the average person your organization serves to see each poster and/or postcard 3 times; for example, post posters in 3 different locations by which the audience member will pass, and ensure that postcards are distributed in multiple locations and/or utilized in multiple interactions (such as appointment reminders, referrals, etc.).

*\*Some online print services offer inexpensive options*

# POSTERS

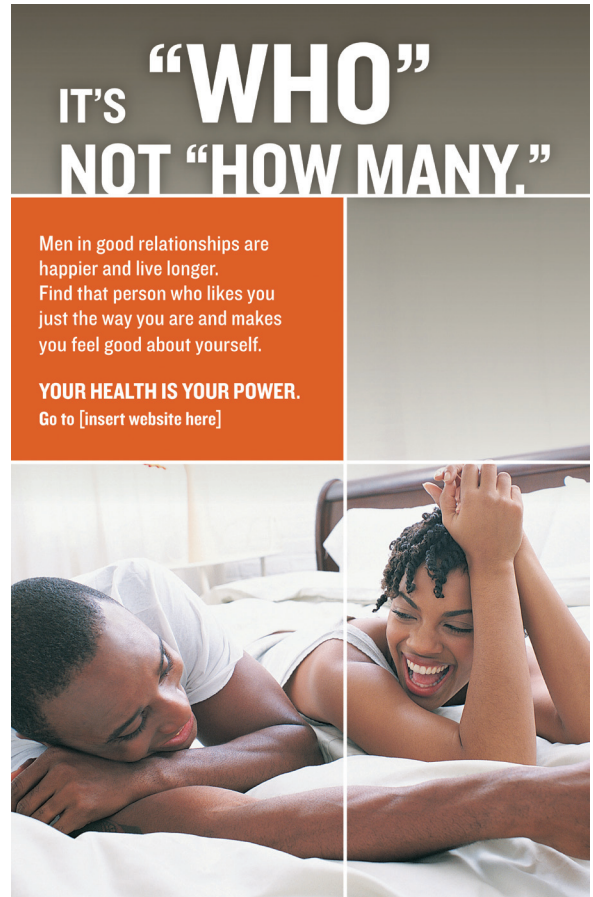


**RELATIONSHIP OR  
HOOK UP?**

Either way, show her your respect.  
Own your choices. Use a condom.

**YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER.**  
Learn more at [insert website here]

Phase 1 Poster

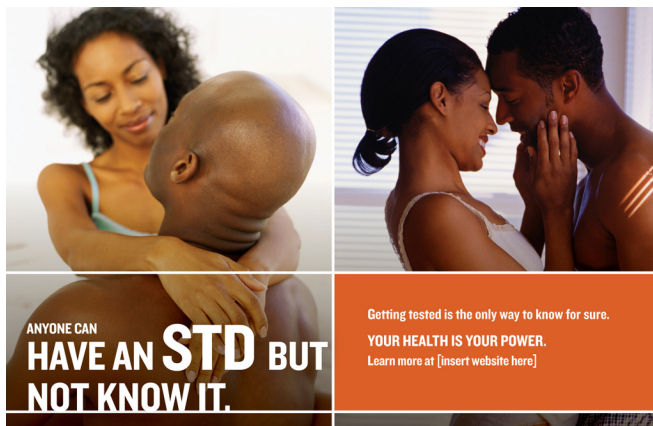


IT'S **“WHO”**  
NOT **“HOW MANY.”**

Men in good relationships are  
happier and live longer.  
Find that person who likes you  
just the way you are and makes  
you feel good about yourself.

**YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER.**  
Go to [insert website here]

Phase 2 Poster



ANYONE CAN  
**HAVE AN STD BUT  
NOT KNOW IT.**

Getting tested is the only way to know for sure.  
**YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER.**  
Learn more at [insert website here]

Phase 3 Poster



**SHE'LL SHARE  
HER SECRETS  
IF YOU SHARE YOURS.**

Women are turned on by a strong man  
who shares. Talk about what you both  
want from sex and a relationship.

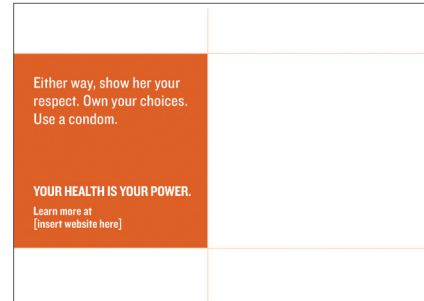
**YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER.**  
Learn more at [insert website here]

Phase 4 Poster

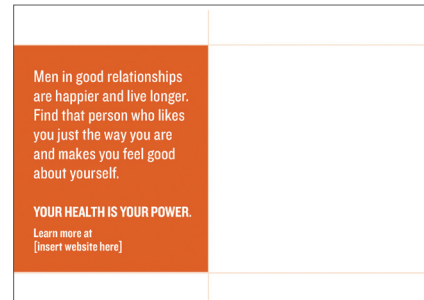


# POSTCARDS

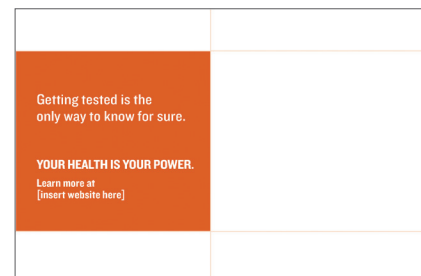
Phase 1 Postcard



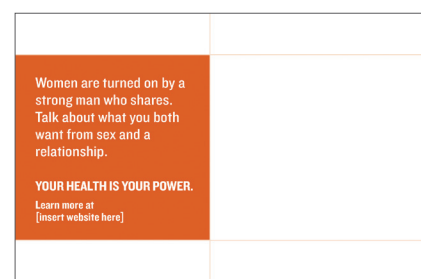
Phase 2 Postcard



Phase 3 Postcard



Phase 4 Postcard



## FACEBOOK CONTENT

If your organization has a Facebook page, the posts below can supplement the content you push out. While your own experience with posting frequency may tell you how effective you've been, some findings suggest that posting once a day is optimal, and once a week is too infrequent. Also, posting on a Thursday or Friday may generate more audience engagement than other days of the week.

Ideally, social media content such as Facebook posts will create likes and responses. Your effort will have the most impact if you are responsive to comments from the audience, because people feel they are being heard. Maintain the positive tone of the campaign in your responses, and be sure to follow your organization's policy regarding comments deemed inappropriate or controversial.

Each post includes an image, which is just as important as the post. Messages were tested with the target audience with images, and images add to the context of the message. The images provided here are sample images that can serve as examples of the types of imagery you should use to accompany your posts.

Sample Facebook cover images are also shown below. You can download a copy of the "Your Health is Your Power" profile image to use on your page and accompany that with a larger cover image with campaign messages, like the examples shown on the opposite page.

To create greater visibility during each messaging phase, it is recommended that your organization use a different cover image associated with each phase, even if only briefly.

### Sources

Dyer P. (2014). Pamorama: 7 ways to raise Facebook engagement. [www.pamorama.net/2015/01/31/7-ways-to-raise-facebook-engagement/](http://www.pamorama.net/2015/01/31/7-ways-to-raise-facebook-engagement/)

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Lee K. (April 2014). The social media frequency guide: how often to poste to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and more. [www.fastcompany.com/3029019/work-smart/the-social-media-frequency-guide-how-often-to-post-to-facebook-twitter-linkedin-a-facebook-posts](http://www.fastcompany.com/3029019/work-smart/the-social-media-frequency-guide-how-often-to-post-to-facebook-twitter-linkedin-a-facebook-posts)

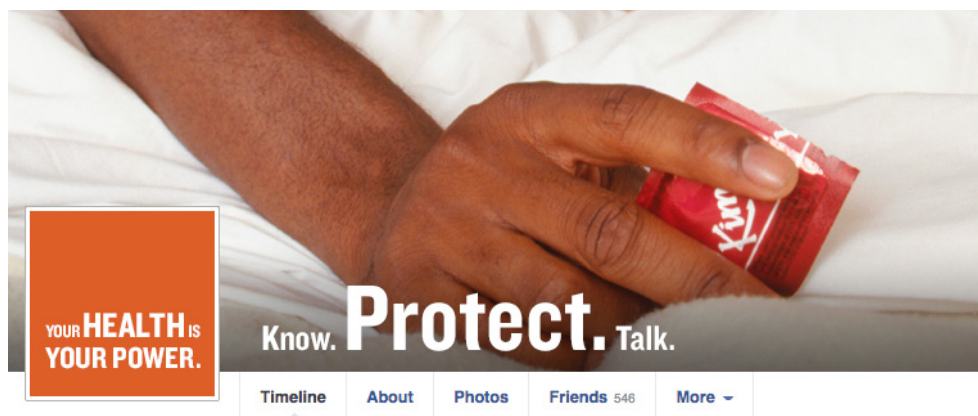
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*Messages that tested best with this audience included provocative or intimate images of either a single woman or heterosexual couple(s) and addressed the topics of STD testing, condom use, and healthy relationships in clear terms, using a catchy first-line to hook readers.*

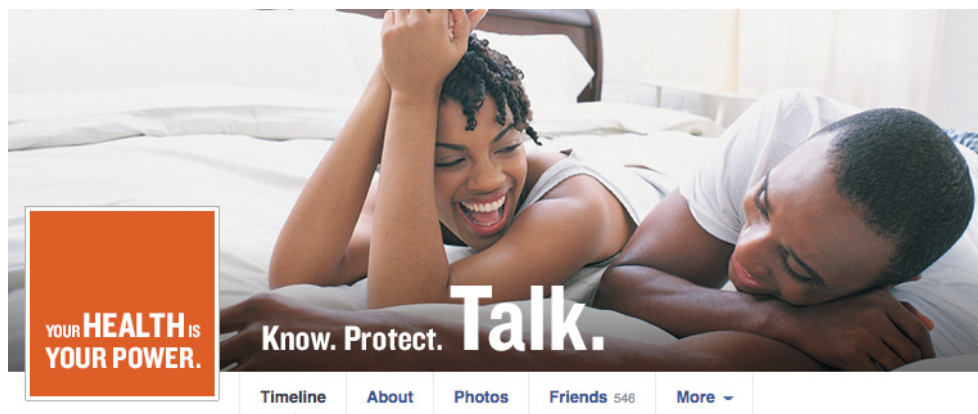
*Facebook posts with photos receive nearly 40% more audience interaction than do status updates alone. Linked images (photos with clickable links to a website/more information) are the most successful at spreading shareable information.*

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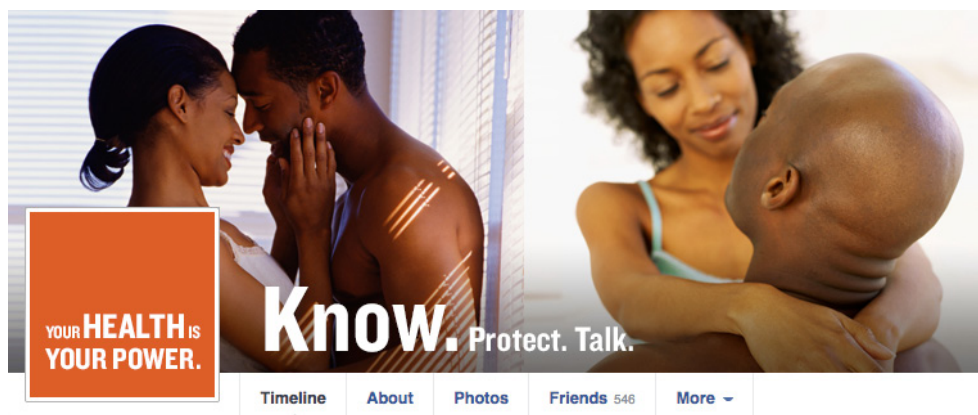
Phase 1 Facebook cover image



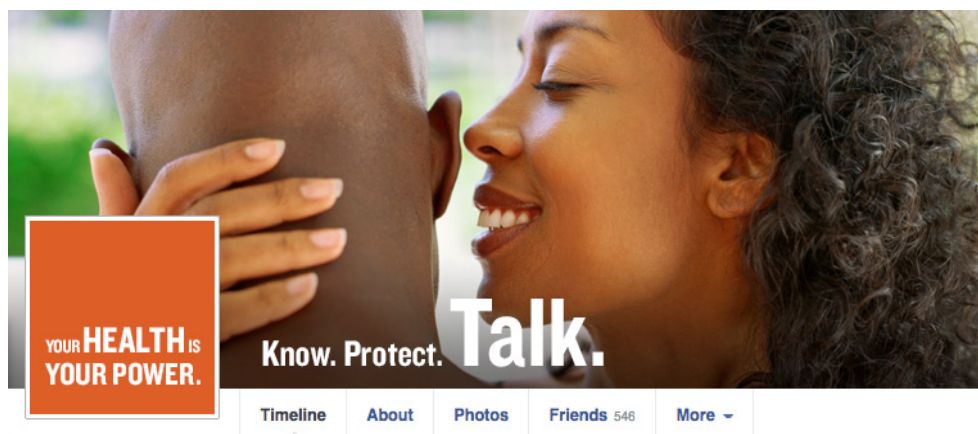
Phase 2 Facebook cover image



Phase 3 Facebook cover image









Phase 4 Facebook cover image









# FACEBOOK POSTS

## Phase I: Consistent Condom Use






Image	Post content
	<p>Many men and women report enjoying sex with condoms as much as sex without condoms. Fit and feel (of the condom, that is) make all the difference. It's not just about using, but choosing the right condoms. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Learn more at [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>5 Easy Ways to Keep the Moment HOT... 1) Take your time. 2) Be real. 3) Make her feel beautiful. 4) Listen to her. 5) Show up prepared and bring condoms. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Go to [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>I do it. For myself. And for my partner. Own your choices. Use a condom. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Go to [INSERT URL]</p>
	<p>Relationship or hook-up? Either way, show her your respect. Own your choices. Use a condom. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Go to [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>Show her you care. Own your choices. Use a condom. Your health is your power.</p>
	<p>They say STDs are common in our community. I say they don't have to be. Know. Protect. Use a condom. Your health is your power.</p>



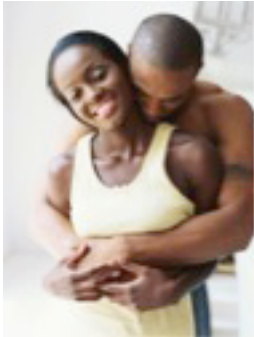




## Phase 2: Healthy Relationships

Image	Post content
	<p>We respect each other. We are real with each other. We use protection with each other. Talk about what you both want from sex and a relationship. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Go to [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>Is she down? For trust. For respect. For you. Talk about what you want and expect from each other. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Go to [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>You have the power to choose real relationships. Take the time to know her in and out of bed. Choose honesty. Choose respect. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Learn more at [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>It's "WHO" not "HOW MANY." Men in good relationships are happier and live longer. Find that person who likes you just the way you are and makes you feel good about yourself. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Learn more at [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>You deserve respect and honesty. So does she. Choose honesty. Choose respect.</p>
	<p>Connection and trust in relationships means better sex. Take the time to know her in and out of bed. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Learn more at [INSERT URL].</p>

### Phase 3: STD testing and other sexual health services

Image	Post content
	<p>Anyone can have an STD and not know it. Getting tested is the only way to know for sure. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Learn more at [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>Check it out. No seriously. Have your doctor check it out too. Ask about tests and vaccines that can keep you in good sexual health. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Go to [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>No way you have an STD, right? That's what most guys with an STD think. Getting tested is the only way to know for sure. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Go to [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>I do it... For myself. And my partner. Get tested regularly for STDs, even when you feel and look great. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Learn more at [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>Your life. Your health. Your responsibility. Ask a doctor about the tests and vaccines that can keep you safe and strong. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Go to [INSERT URL].</p>

## Phase 4: Open and honest conversations with partners

Image	Post content
	<p>Women like a man with a plan. Talk about your plan to prevent STDs and pregnancy and you might find out what else she likes... YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Go to [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>Before we get together, we talk together. Protecting against pregnancy and STDs is my power. MY HEALTH IS MY POWER. Go to [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>The #1 thing about you that turns her on? Honesty and communication can go a long way. Take the time to know her in and out of bed. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Learn more at [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>She'll share her secrets if you share yours. Women are turned on by a strong man who shares. Talk about what you both want from sex and a relationship. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Learn more at [INSERT URL].</p>
	<p>I know what I want. And respect where she stands. We are honest with each other about what we want from sex and a relationship. YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER. Go to [INSERT URL].</p>

## TWEETS

If your organization has a Twitter presence, you can incorporate these Twitter messages into your overall strategy. As part of your overall strategy, tweeting 3 to 5 times a day is ideal. Aim for at least 2 tweets a day if possible. Based on the length of your effort to promote these messages, spread the tweets out and consider generating additional tweets to supplement the messages.

Here are some additional tips:

- Tweets can be up to 140 characters long, though it's recommended that you keep some tweets shorter (less than 100 characters).
- Adapt tweets to current events or news when possible, including your own organizational events and activities.
- Where possible, include links. Links may be to the "drop-in" articles provided in this toolkit that you may post to your organization's website, to other relevant content on your website, or to web content found elsewhere (see the resources list at the end of this toolkit). If you have images or video that are appropriate to highlight, that helps to garner engagement.
- If you need to shorten links, you can use a number of shortlink services, including bitly.com.
- If you are adapting tweets or creating new ones, fill in tweets with hashtags (#) for relevant content and the "at" sign (@) – called "mentions" – to direct people to other relevant Twitter resources. See examples in the messages below. Both these strategies can help to increase retweets and click-throughs.
- Retweet relevant tweets and include #HealthIsPower and any other relevant hashtags or mentions.

Additional recommended hashtags include:

#MyChoicesRmyPower  
#TestingIsPower  
#CommunicationIsPower  
#ProtectionIsPower  
#RespectIsPower  
#TrustIsPower

Ideally, social media content such as Tweets will create likes and responses. Your effort will have the most impact if you are responsive to comments from the audience, because people feel they are being heard. Maintain the positive tone of the campaign in your responses, and be sure to follow your organization's policy regarding comments deemed inappropriate or controversial.

Keep in mind that the success of twitter posts will depend both on the content of the message and the time of day that it's posted. Studies suggest that mentions and posts are highest on Tuesdays and Thursdays and lowest on Saturdays and Sundays.

Sources

Larson M. Brandwatch Report (Retail Report 2015). [www.brandwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Brandwatch-Retail-Report.pdf](http://www.brandwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Brandwatch-Retail-Report.pdf)

Twitter. Best Practices. BE the best at what, when and how you tweet. <https://biz.twitter.com/en-gb/best-practices>



## Phase 1: Consistent and correct condom use

1. Men and women say sex with #condoms is just as enjoyable. Fit & feel is key! #ProtectionIsPower #HealthIsPower
2. Keep the moment HOT! Be prepared with #condoms so you can focus on the fun. #ProtectionIsPower #HealthIsPower
3. Relationship or hookup? Either way-- Own your choices & use a #condom. #ProtectionIsPower #HealthIsPower
4. The rules are the same even if you're in a relationship. Use a condom. #ProtectionIsPower #HealthIsPower
5. Don't be "in the dark" next time the lights go down...Have a plan to prevent STDs/pregnancy. Use a condom. #ProtectionIsPower #HealthIsPower

## Phase 2: Healthy relationships

1. Is she down? Talk about what you both want & expect. Relationship or hook-up, communication & respect are key. #RespectIsPower #HealthIsPower
2. Your #style says a lot about you. So do your #choices. Choose #honesty & #respect. #HealthIsPower
3. You know her in bed. How about OUT of bed? Choose #honesty & #respect to keep it real. #HealthIsPower
4. Men in good #relationships are happier & live longer. #RespectIsPower #HealthIsPower
5. What about you turns her on the most? NOT THAT! Connection & trust make for good sex. Know each other in & out of bed. #HealthIsPower

## Phase 3: STD testing and other sexual health services

1. #GettingTested is the only sure way to know if you or your partner might have an STD. #TestingIsPower #HealthIsPower
2. Can your package talk? NO! So YOU have to talk to the doc about what tests & vaccines can keep you safe. #TestingIsPower #HealthIsPower
3. Make it your business to take care of your BUSINESS. Do it for you & your partner! #TestingIsPower #HealthIsPower
4. Are you a man with a plan? What's your plan to prevent STIs & pregnancy? Women like a man with a plan. #TestingIsPower #HealthIsPower
5. Before you get busy, get busy talking – about how to protect against STDs & pregnancy. #CommunicationIsPower #HealthIsPower
6. No way you have an STD, right? That's what most guys with an STD think! Testing is the only way to know. #TestingIsPower #HealthIsPower
7. It's your life. It's your health. Talk to the doc about what tests & vaccines can keep you safe. #HealthIsPower

## Phase 4: Open and honest conversations with partners

1. She'll share her SECRETS if you share yours! Talk about what u both want from sex & a relationship. #CommunicationIsPower #HealthIsPower
2. Know what you want, and #respect what she wants – from sex and a relationship. #CommunicationIsPower #HealthIsPower
3. Honesty= respect. Talk about what you both want from sex & a relationship. #RespectIsPower #HealthIsPower
4. What about you turns her on the most? Talk to her & find out. Know each other in & out of bed. #HealthIsPower

## WEB BANNERS AND “DROP-IN” WEB CONTENT

Website content (in the form of drop-in articles or features) is included in this toolkit to offer the audience more information and an opportunity to engage more deeply.

The accompanying web banners can be posted with the articles and/or be used on your home page as a link to the articles on your site.

- Determine an appropriate area of your website to post the “drop-in” article content for each campaign phase.
- Add links to relevant content in your organization’s site and/or feature relevant services you offer.
- You can also include links to relevant resources found at the end of this toolkit.
- Once you’ve posted content to your website, create a Facebook post and Tweet (if your organization uses these forms of social media) to direct people to it. Article titles can serve as good teasers.

**In audience testing, article formats and topics that garnered the most interest were those that:**

- Included a brief list of sexual-health-related facts or tips
- Reveal surprising or new information (8 Surprising STD Facts and Despite our differences, men and women are often looking for the same thing)
- Offered a woman’s perspective on sex, relationships (insights into their desires, thoughts, needs)
- Used an informal (did you know) tone

### Phase I: Consistent and correct condom use

**Article title: 3 steps to better sex with condoms**

*Sex is HOT when you’ve got your condom plan*

Men and women both report that they enjoy sex just as much with a condom as without one. For real – a national survey says so. Sex with condoms rated highly when it came to pleasure, being aroused, and having an orgasm. The important part is finding a condom that fits well and feels good, and then to be ready for the moment.

#### **When you have a condom plan:**

You don’t have to stop and talk about using a condom when things are getting hot. You can go for it at just the right moment – no delays finding a condom. When a condom is your rule, no one has to worry about STDs, pregnancy, or trust issues while you’re trying to get it on.

**Making a plan is easy** – and it might even require a little fun experimenting with different condoms:



- Make condoms your rule
- Find the fit and feel that works best for you and your partner
- Have condoms handy in all the right places, for just the right time
- 

**Set your rules about condoms.** The easiest rule is all condoms, all the time—especially if you haven’t discussed STD status. Most of the time, you can’t tell if your or your partner has an STD, including HIV. If you have a clear rule, then there’s no question about why you’re using a condom this time around.

**Find the right condom for you and your partner.** Condoms come in all shapes and sizes (and even flavors!) so think about these things as you try them out:

- Is it too tight? Does it feel like it’s too tight at the head, shaft, or base?
- Is it too short? When it’s rolled down, does it reach to the base of the penis?
- Is it too loose anywhere on the penis?
- Is it too long? Is there still some unrolled condom at the base?
- Is it comfortable overall? You’re good to go!

Then there’s the extra fun stuff – ribbed, lubricated, flavored, warming...you’ll just have to try them out to find out what you both like.

**Where do you like to have sex?** Next to the bed? In the drawer by the sofa? Have condoms ready there. There’s no fumbling, no “Hold on”...you can get right to it.

If she’s got it covered, then that just makes your job easier. There’s nothing sexier than a woman who’s also got a condom plan!

#### **Condom basics:**

- Check the expiration date
- Use only latex, polyurethane, or polyisoprene condoms
- Put on a condom before you start having sex and keep it on until finished. Hold the base of the condom when you pull out.
- Squeeze the tip of the condom before putting it on to leave room at the tip (here’s some more info about putting a condom on right)
- Using 2 condoms does NOT reduce your risk for STDs or pregnancy – it can actually increase the likelihood of condoms breaking
- Female condoms are an option too – learn more: <http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/sexual-health/all-about-condoms/female-condoms/>

**Find out where you can get condoms for free, NO QUESTIONS ASKED, at [condomfinder.org](http://condomfinder.org).**

#### **YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER.**

Sources:

Sanders et al. Condom Use During Most Recent Vaginal Intercourse Event Among a Probability Sample of Adults in the United States..J Sex Med 2010;7(suppl 5):362–373.

<http://www.itsyoursexlife.com/gyt/condoms/>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2598697/>

## Phase 2: Healthy Relationships

**Article title:** Secret to having good sex? Having good sexual health

*Men share their opinions*

Men from around the country were asked what sexual health meant to them – and it turns out it’s not all about their physical well-being. Being STD-free and having good sexual function were definitely important. But men also talked about their mental well-being, having pleasurable and enjoyable sex, and being emotionally ready for the responsibilities of sex. Most men said these things below were important parts of sexual health – how important are they to you?

- HIV & STD testing
- Using condoms
- Making thoughtful sexual decisions
- Talking about sexual health issues and STDs with partners
- Discussing relationship expectations with partners
- Talking about using condoms with casual partners

Sexual health is about taking care of you. But it’s also about respecting and taking care of your partner. Good sexual health means:

- You’re having healthy relationships – even if she is not your soul mate, life-long partner, or wife. You both deserve honesty, respect, to feel safe and comfortable, intimacy and affection, and to be treated well.
- You feel good about yourself – you’re in control of your choices, confident, and stress-free.
- Your body is healthy – as in, STD-free and having good sexual function
- Your sex life is satisfying – for both you and your partner. You’re both getting what you want because you’re communicating, being honest, and showing respect for each other.

Your sexual health is all about the choices you make – and your choices say a lot about you.

**YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER.**





### Phase 3: STD testing and other sexual health services

#### Article title: 6 STD facts that might surprise you

*More reasons to protect yourself and steer clear of STDs*

1. **Many people with an STD don't know they have one.** Many STDs don't have noticeable symptoms. You can't tell if your or a partner has an STD by looking.

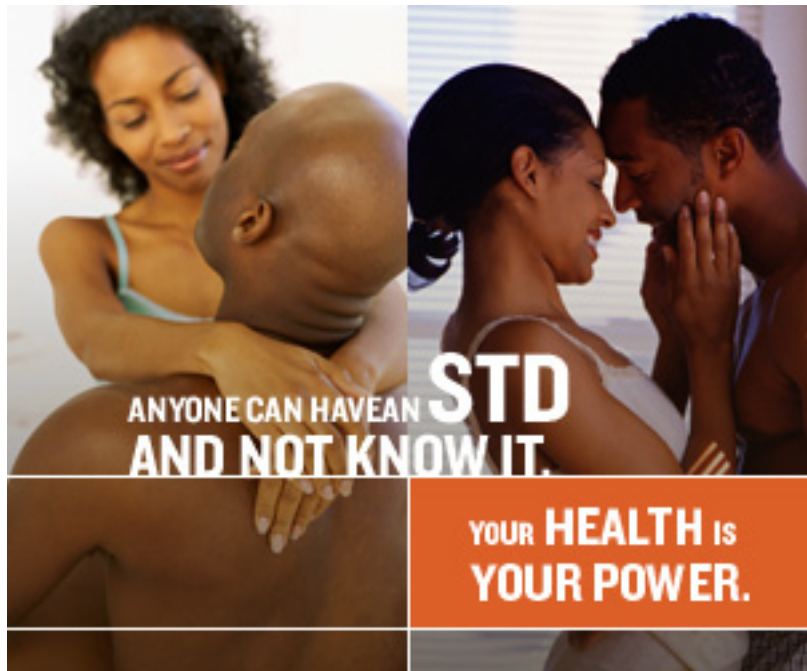
2. When used right, **condoms are amazingly effective at preventing STDs.** They are the ONLY method that protects against both STDs (including HIV) AND pregnancy. Here's how to properly use a condom: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-qNGAJ1jiM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-qNGAJ1jiM)

3. Each year there are over 1.4 million chlamydia cases reported in the U.S. 85% of them are among young people, ages 29 and under. **When was the last time you were tested?**

4. Having an STD, like herpes or gonorrhea, can **increase your chances of getting HIV** (if exposed to an infected partner).

5. Herpes affects more than **1 in 6 people in the U.S.** Yet most don't know they are infected because the symptoms are mild or non-existent. Learn about this common infection so you can take steps to protect yourself and your partners.

6. Some STDs can cause a man to become sterile (that is, prevent him from being able to father a child). It is rare, but it is one of the consequences of untreated gonorrhea. If you don't have health insurance, you can still get **FREE STD and HIV testing.** Check out [GetTested.cdc.gov](http://GetTested.cdc.gov) for free testing sites. If you have health insurance and are at risk for STDs, most STD tests are now free – not even a co-pay (thanks to the Affordable Care Act)!



#### Article title: Your sexual health is about more than steering clear of STDs

Everyone's sexual health needs are different. You might be playing the field, having a dry spell, in a relationship, or thinking about having a child... Wherever you're at, here are some important questions to ask yourself:

- Do you know your body well and how you can protect it?
- Have you noticed any changes in your health recently?
- Do you have any concerns about conditions, diseases, or issues related to sexual functioning or performance?
- When you see the doctor, do you talk about sexual health to make sure you get services that keep you healthy?

Answering these questions and figuring out what’s right for you is a first start to a healthier, happier you.

**Article title: Ways to take care of yourself**

Using condoms and getting tested for STDs (including HIV) are important ways of taking care of yourself and the people you have sex with. You might also be able to protect yourself and your partner(s) with vaccines (shots), like the vaccine for HPV (human papillomavirus). Knowing how you can protect yourself and your partner(s) from pregnancy and STDs is something your doctor or other health care provider can help you with.

Title: 4 easy questions to know if you’re at risk for STDs

1. Have you had sex (vaginal, anal, or oral) without a condom?
2. Have you had sex with someone whose STD status you haven’t discussed?
3. Do you have multiple partners?
4. Do you have a partner who answers yes to any of these?

If you answered yes to any of these, then you are at risk for getting an STD. Never assume you know your or your partner’s status until you’ve both been tested. It’s time for a sexual health checkup. Make an appointment with a doctor or clinic at [www.ncshguide.org/resources/find-a-provider-or-clinic](http://www.ncshguide.org/resources/find-a-provider-or-clinic), and talk openly with a provider to make sure your needs are met. To get the most out of your visit, you might want to think of questions to ask or things to consider ahead of time [see <http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/sexual-health/ten-questions-to-ask/>].

**YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR POWER.**

Sources:

National Coalition for Sexual Health. Take Charge of Your Sexual Health. [www.npwh.org/files/SexualHealthGuide-03-26-14.pdf](http://www.npwh.org/files/SexualHealthGuide-03-26-14.pdf)

CDC. Genital Herpes- CDC Fact Sheet. [www.cdc.gov/std/herpes/stdfact-herpes-detailed.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/std/herpes/stdfact-herpes-detailed.htm)

University of Maryland Medical Center. Sexually Transmitted Diseases. <http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/condition/sexually-transmitted-diseases>

## Phase 4: Open and honest conversations with partners

### Article title: Does she know your turn-ons? Do you know hers?

*Open and honest communication can make for good sex – and good relationships*

Talking about some things with your partner, like what you want out of a relationship and sex, can feel awkward, but it can also help to ease your mind. It means you don't have to think about it when things heat up. Talking about other things – like what you both like and want to try– can bring you closer, and help to heat things up.

It's all about being on the same page and knowing what you want and expect from each other. Here are some topics you should cover – ideally before things get hot – that will ease the lead-up to sex and help you to know where you both stand:



- What you are ready and looking for in a relationship
- STDs – the last time you got tested, your results, and how to protect yourselves
- Birth control – in addition to condoms, what other methods you're using
- What you like and what you want to try sexually

It's always helpful to know how you feel about these things and be ready to share.

If you are about to get it on and HAVEN'T talked about it, make sure to protect yourselves. You can be straight-forward: condoms are your rule, especially when you haven't had "the talk." She will respect that you're taking care of your health and hers.

#### **So now it's time to get the conversation started.**

- Figure out what you want to get out of a conversation: Is it for you both to get tested? Is it to agree to use condoms? Is it to clarify that you would like a committed relationship?
- Decide on the best place and time to talk – where you have privacy and when you're relaxed.
- Think about how you will bring it up. You can even practice some conversation starters:
  - You can open up a conversation by mentioning something you've heard in the news or from your doctor – or that you read this article – and that it's gotten you thinking.
  - You can start by saying how hard it's been for you to bring it up.

- Think about the “best case” and “worst case” scenarios and be prepared for how you’ll react. For example:
  - If you’re talking about STDs, you could get unexpected news that she has an STD. Remember that STDs are very common and judging or finger pointing is never helpful. All STDs can be treated and most can be cured. There are ways to have healthy relationships and safe, fulfilling sex with someone who has an STD.
  - If you’re talking about STD testing and she gets defensive, emphasize that this is not an issue of trust or cheating-- it’s about protecting yourselves. Most people view a partner’s suggestion to get tested as the responsible, careful thing to do. Getting tested together is a good way to support one another.
  - If you’re talking about a relationship, it might turn out that you are looking for different things. Consider whether there may be some common ground, or how you can move forward respectfully, so that neither of you gets hurt or disappointed. Respect her feelings and she should respect yours.
- Listen and keep an open mind. Take the time to hear her out and understand what she’s trying to say. You both might have difficult things to share, and that takes courage.
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- Talk about how important it is that you both are protected and on the same page.

Keep in mind—this doesn’t have to be a one-time or major “talk.” It could be an ongoing conversation with your partner. Here are some good ways to approach any conversation:

- Speak up about what bothers you. Do this in a kind, calm way so that she is open to hearing you out. Holding it in can mean it comes out as anger later. You can also talk about what you do (and do not) like and maybe want more of, and learn what’s working for her.
- Respect and listen to your partner. You have your wants and needs, and so does she. Making an effort to understand your partner goes a long way.
- Compromise. Sometimes you just have to do it! You’re going to disagree on some things, so the best you can do is try to resolve things in a fair and rational way.
- Be supportive. When you’re reassuring and encouraging, you help to build each other up.

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### Links to additional resources

*In testing with the target audience, a large proportion of African American men expressed that they would be interested in learning more about sexual health by going to a website for more information. The host or source of the website (i.e., whether it was a dot com, dot gov, or a group or agency with which they are affiliated) was not a critical determinant of men’s willingness to visit the site.*

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## EVALUATION AND REFINEMENT

Your organization can demonstrate effectiveness and learn how to improve your efforts to promote sexual health by gathering feedback and tracking data during campaign phases, when feasible. If your organization has a robust website and social media presence, you may already be using analytics, such as the number of website visitors and how many people have “liked” your Facebook page. Below are some measures your organization can take to track the reach of and audience engagement with your Health Is Power campaign efforts:

### Process Evaluation and Tracking Measures

- Page views for Health Is Power web “drop-in” articles
- Click-throughs from web banners
- Facebook activity (likes, shares, comments)
- Twitter activity (likes, retweets, mentions, hashtags)
- Number of print materials distributed
- Number of participants in events and activities
- Number of calls or inquiries about men’s sexual health during campaign phases

Tailor your content based on how it performs. Pay attention to audience responses on social media, revising your messaging (posts and images) as needed in response to positive or negative feedback.

### Outcome Evaluation

With clearly defined and measurable objectives, you can evaluate campaign effectiveness, assessing changes in your audience’s targeted knowledge, attitudes or behaviors associated with campaign messaging or activities. This requires strategic planning early on but can be achieved through quick surveys of your audience or the tracking of relevant services (e.g., sexual health visits), as appropriate.

For example, you can use online or in-person surveys to assess young men’s (1) frequency of condom use; (2) perceptions and knowledge about “healthy relationships”; (3) recent STD testing or sexual-healthcare-seeking behaviors; and (4) recent sexual-health communication with partners.

You can also work with clinic or community-health partners to track men’s service-seeking behaviors, comparing before-and-after campaign data, such as the number of patient sexual health visits, STD tests or vaccinations conducted. Male patients seeking sexual health services can be asked if they heard of the Health Is Power campaign to assess potential associations with campaign awareness.

Sources:

National Cancer Institute. Making Health Communication Programs Work. [www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/cancerlibrary/pink-book/pink-book.pdf](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/cancerlibrary/pink-book/pink-book.pdf)

Seiter C. The minimalist’s guide to social media metrics. Marketing Land. <http://marketingland.com/the-minimalists-guide-to-social-media-metrics-43011>

## HEALTH AWARENESS/OBSERVANCE OPPORTUNITIES

The health awareness and observance dates below offer opportunities to feature campaign messages and utilize toolkit content. It is recommended that you consider these dates and any events and activities your organization may sponsor as you consider the time frame for implementing the 4 phases of the Health Is Power campaign.

Observances in February, in addition to Valentine’s Day, are an ideal time to implement phase 1. In April, STD awareness month and National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day can be good times to implement phase 3. World AIDS Day in December is a high-visibility observance and your organization should consider integrating Health Is Power messages and resources, of any phase, into your communication activities.

<b>January</b>	<b>National Stalking Awareness Month</b>
<b>February</b>	<b>National Condom Month</b> <b>National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (Feb 7)</b> <b>National Condom Awareness Day (Feb 14)</b>
<b>April</b>	<b>STD Awareness Month</b> <b>National Infertility Awareness Week</b> <b>National Minority Health Month</b> <b>Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month- Day of Action (April 1)</b> <b>World Health Day (April 7)</b> <b>National Youth HIV &amp; AIDS Awareness Day (April 10)</b>
<b>May</b>	<b>National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month</b> <b>HIV Vaccine Awareness Day (May 18)</b>
<b>June</b>	<b>Men’s Health Month</b> <b>National HIV Testing Day (June 27)</b>
<b>September</b>	<b>Prostate Cancer Awareness Month</b> <b>Sexual Health Awareness Month</b>
<b>October</b>	<b>Domestic Violence Awareness Month</b>
<b>December</b>	<b>World AIDS Day (Dec 1)</b>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In testing with the target audience, a large proportion of African American men expressed that they would be interested in learning more about sexual health by going to an appropriate website. Including additional resources, such as website links, in your campaign activities can help to increase knowledge and promote healthy behaviors. Men said they were most likely to go to websites hosted by a federal agency (such as the CDC), a local or state government agency (such as your state's department of public health), and a group with which they may be affiliated, like a fraternity. A slightly smaller proportion of men indicated that they'd be likely to go to the website of a community-based organization, as well. Below are some online resources recommended for use as part of your Health Is Power campaign efforts:

### Condom use

Male condoms

[www.ashasexualhealth.org/sexual-health/all-about-condoms](http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/sexual-health/all-about-condoms)

Locator for free condoms across the U.S. and for organizations to register as condom distributors

[www.condomfinder.org/find.php](http://www.condomfinder.org/find.php)

Condom information including male video testimonials

[bedsider.org/methods/male\\_condom#details\\_tab](http://bedsider.org/methods/male_condom#details_tab)

### Sexual health and healthy relationships

American Sexual Health Association

[www.ashasexualhealth.org/sexual-health/talking-about-sex](http://www.ashasexualhealth.org/sexual-health/talking-about-sex)

Healthy Black Men

[healthyblackmen.org/sexual-health](http://healthyblackmen.org/sexual-health)

Planned Parenthood: Men's sexual health information

[www.plannedparenthood.org/health-info/men](http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-info/men)

Go Ask Alice! Questions and answer on men's sexual health

[goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/93](http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/93)

### Sexual Health Services

National Coalition for Sexual Health: Preventive Sexual Health Services for Men

[www.ncshguide.org/services/men](http://www.ncshguide.org/services/men)

STD screening site locator, including links to additional STD information

[gettested.cdc.gov](http://gettested.cdc.gov)

