An illustration of a hospital emergency department. A doctor in a white lab coat and green shirt stands on the right, holding a green clipboard. A patient in a purple shirt sits on a yellow hospital bed on the left, also holding a black clipboard. A speech bubble from the doctor contains the text: "You can lead a healthy life no matter the results of your HIV test." The background shows hospital equipment and a window with a potted plant.

**You can lead a healthy life  
no matter the results of  
your HIV test.**

# **HIV Testing in Emergency Departments**

**and why it's important for HIV prevention and  
treatment among adolescents and young adults.**

## HIV testing among youth needs work.

Adolescents account for **60%** of all undiagnosed HIV cases in the US but are less likely to get tested than adults.<sup>1</sup>

**Less than 10%** of high school students report having ever been tested for HIV.<sup>2</sup>

## A major barrier is regular access to healthcare.

Among teens and young adults,

**1 in 3** do not report a source of primary care<sup>3</sup>

**5 in 6** do not have a yearly physical examination<sup>4</sup>

So it's no surprise that youth often report using Emergency Departments (ED) for non-urgent medical care, such as a bad flu or infection.<sup>5</sup>

**The ED is a safety net for many youth.**



## EDs rarely screen youth for HIV.

In a survey of physicians in pediatric EDs, only about

**15%** screened young patients for HIV

at least 10 times in the past six months.<sup>6</sup>

This number might be generous, too! Studies looking at patient health records found that HIV testing rates are actually lower.

**4 in 100** patients in pediatric EDs got HIV tests on average

## Testing is also low even when youth have STIs.

If someone has HIV but doesn't know it, an STI can lead to serious medical complications.

Still, in cases where youth visited EDs for STI-related complications

**25%** got screened for HIV during visits<sup>7</sup>

## When interviewed, providers in EDs saw HIV testing as:

- 1 not as high of a priority
- 2 more appropriate for primary care settings
- 3 difficult to talk about
- 4 potential violation of privacy<sup>8</sup>



**Improved testing in EDs can help identify youth who might not know they are living with HIV.**

In a study of 193 young adults diagnosed through HIV screening in adult EDs,

**5% had 26 ED visits**

during the time they likely already had HIV. <sup>9</sup>

Each visit is a missed chance to prevent and diagnose HIV early, which lead to better health outcomes.



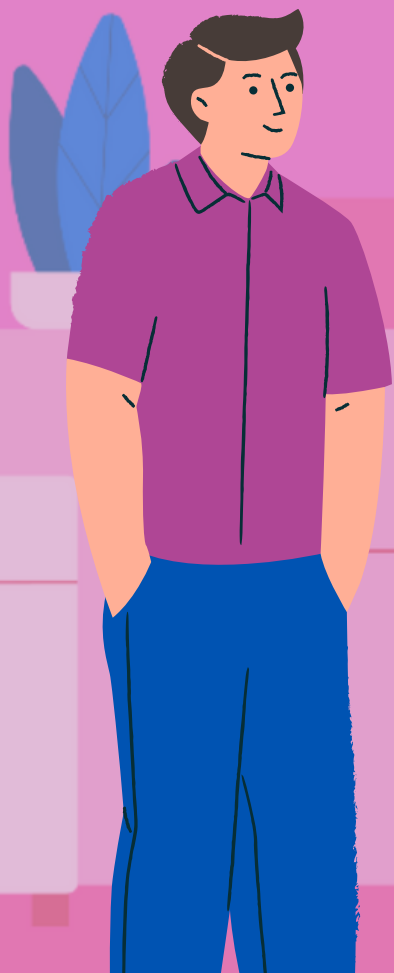
I've never had a HIV test in my life or thought about whether I have HIV, much less while at the ED...

**Testing in EDs also helps reduce stigma and biases against HIV.**

The CDC currently recommends a universal approach to testing, meaning that **everyone who comes into an ED for care is offered HIV testing, no matter their behaviors.** <sup>10</sup>

**This challenges negative views and assumptions among both patients and providers about who should or should not be tested.**

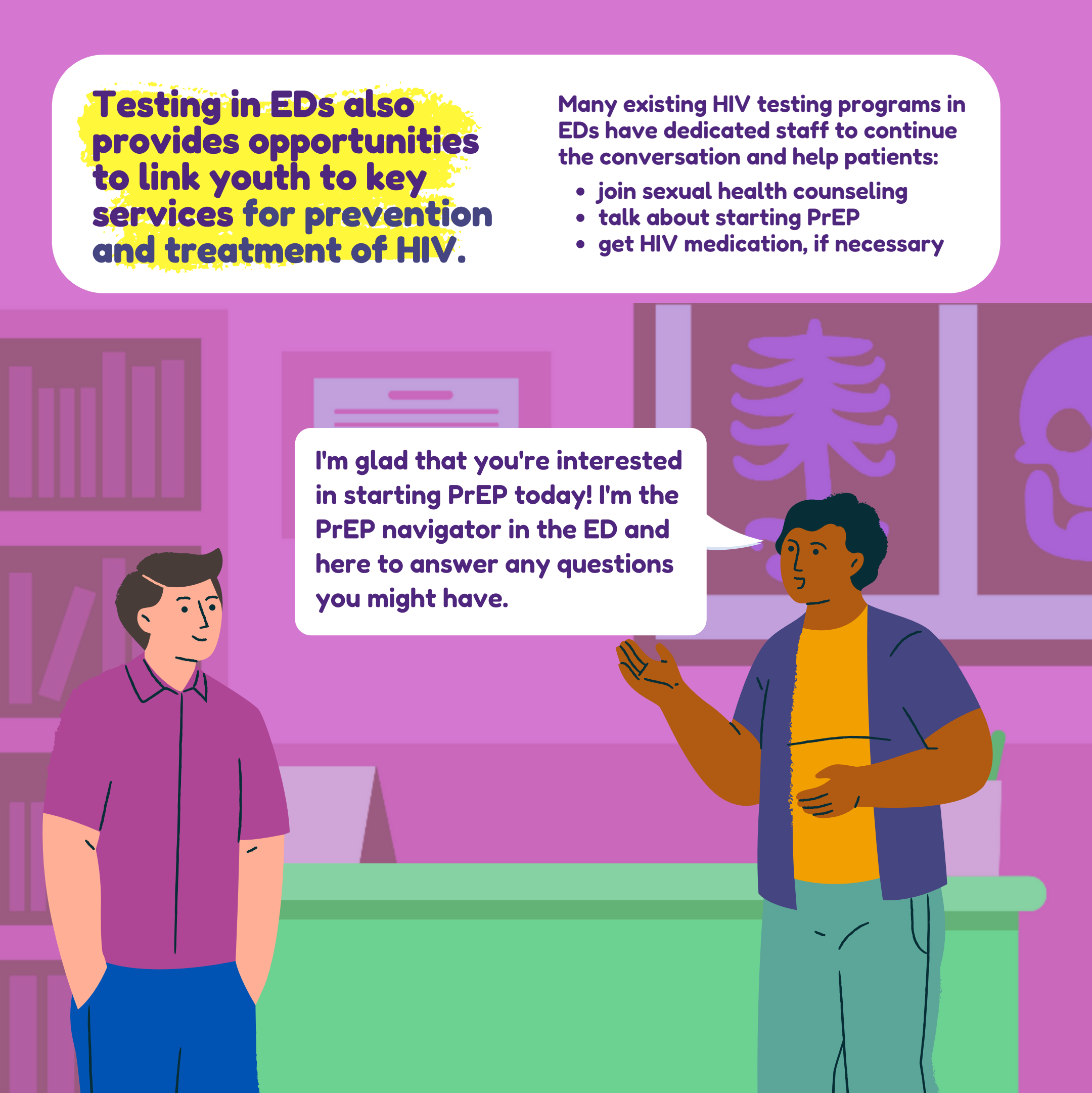
**We want to make it part of the regular conversation – an HIV test is just one more tool we can use to get a clearer picture of your health.**



**Testing in EDs also provides opportunities to link youth to key services for prevention and treatment of HIV.**

Many existing HIV testing programs in EDs have dedicated staff to continue the conversation and help patients:

- join sexual health counseling
- talk about starting PrEP
- get HIV medication, if necessary



I'm glad that you're interested in starting PrEP today! I'm the PrEP navigator in the ED and here to answer any questions you might have.

**Researchers still need to determine the most effective strategies for HIV testing in EDs, especially in pediatric settings.**

**Screen2Prevent (S2P) aims to fill this gap.**

### **What are the goals?**

ATN 164 Screen2Prevent is a study that aims to determine the most effective strategies in ED settings for:

- 1** Screening youth for HIV
- 2** Linking youth to PrEP or HIV services

### **What will the study do?**

The study will use a computerized survey to find eligible youth to be tested for HIV and also identify youth that might qualify for PrEP.

If someone starts PrEP, they will receive a texting tool to help youth start PrEP and connect to care.

**Stay tuned to learn more about the S2P study and other important topics!**





## Statement on Terminology

*Research demands that we categorize people in ways that are not always fully descriptive and inclusive of intersectionalities. This may create feelings of discomfort or further minimization, which is never our goal. This research is meant to serve the community, and we are doing the best we can to collect data in meaningful ways.*

*The wording contained in this literature is part of an open dialogue including the researchers and an interdisciplinary group of young adults known as the Subject Matter Research Consultants (SMRCs) who add value to this work through their lived experiences and subject matter expertise. The SMRCs are a part of communities that are most affected by the topics addressed within this research.*

**To learn more about ATN studies and other activities, visit:**  
**[atnconnect.org](https://atnconnect.org)**

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