

Sexual health campaign

Choose to protect yourself – always use a condom

A new sexual health campaign '**Choose to protect yourself – always use a condom**' will be launched by the Public Health Agency on 17 June 2015. The campaign will run until 31 December 2015 and aims to promote good sexual health and contribute to reducing sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Northern Ireland. It will include mass media advertising and will be supported by public relations and social media activity as well as a new website www.sexualhealthni.info

The campaign is part of a wider programme of work contributing to meeting the targets set out in the DHSSPS *Sexual Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan*.

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/dhssps_sexual_health_plan_front_cvr.pdf

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/sexual-health-plan-addendum.pdf

The overall aim of the Sexual Health Promotion Strategy and Action Plan is to improve, protect and promote the sexual health and wellbeing of the Northern Ireland population. This campaign focuses on one of the key objectives – to reduce the incidence of STIs, including HIV.

Target audience

The campaign target audience is 16–34 year olds, as STI rates are highest in this age group.

Campaign development

In developing the campaign, a number of creative approaches and messages were pre-tested to determine which would be most effective in encouraging the target audience to avoid risky sexual behaviours. Concepts for TV and radio were tested, as well as headlines for poster and online advertising.

The focus groups were structured by gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic group and geographical location. All participants had previously been or were currently sexually active and there was also a mix in relationship status from single through to those in steady relationships.

Feedback during testing was very positive and the target audience endorsed the need for this type of campaign.

Core message

The core campaign message is ***Have unprotected sex and you could be sleeping with everyone your partner's ever slept with.*** Testing indicated the message was strong and would encourage behaviour change. Many of those taking part in the focus groups hadn't thought about unprotected sex in this way and it personalised the risks. For those who had thought about it like this, it prompted them to consider their own behaviour and reconsider how risky unprotected sex is.



All campaign advertising will focus on the core message ***Have unprotected sex and you could be sleeping with everyone your partner's ever slept with*** and include the strapline ***Choose to protect yourself – always use a condom.*** 'Choose to protect yourself' was well received in testing because it didn't have a lecturing tone or tell the audience what to do. Instead it focused on having a choice and taking responsibility.

Two messages tested well for use in print and online advertising:

- **People with STIs don't always have symptoms**
- **24% of people with HIV don't know they have it**

Both messages would encourage the use of protection and getting checked for STIs.

Campaign elements and timing

The campaign will be launched on 17 June 2015 and advertising will run from 22 June until 31 December 2015. Media will include TV, radio, cinema, online and washroom advertising. Online advertising will run from 22 June until 31 December 2015. TV, cinema, radio and washroom advertising will run in June, July, September, November and December.

PR and social media activity will support and extend the campaign.

Website – www.sexualhealthni.info

The website sexualhealthni.info will be promoted on all campaign advertising. The website includes information on safer sex and health, STIs, testing, contraception and relationships. A film focusing on a genito urinary medicine (GUM) clinic also features on the site.

The need for web-based information was supported in testing and feedback from 16–34 year olds included:

- the internet would be a first port of call to find out about STI-related issues and contraception;
- the website content should go beyond information on diseases and should give practical advice on how and when to get treated;
- the website should include a mini 'tour' of a GUM clinic – transparency can help dispel the myths about what happens there.

Measuring the campaign's impact

The campaign's impact will be measured using pre- and post-campaign surveys to assess audience awareness, understanding, knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Web traffic will also be measured and data recorded on STIs monitored.



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