



JAMAICA AIDS SUPPORT FOR LIFE

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jamaica AIDS Support for Life Targets Youth For Safer Sex Week

Jamaica AIDS Support For Life (JASL) has intensified its message to youth, aged 15-24, about the importance of safer sex practices with a full slate of intervention activities for Safer Sex Week.

Safer Sex Week is observed from February 10-16 and coincides with the hugely popular Valentine's Day, which is known for its sexual risk-taking and fleeting decision-making, some of which have been known to have life-altering repercussions. It also coincides with Condom Day, a global celebration promoting healthy sexual relationships on February 14. This year's theme is, 'Consent', meaning agreeing to do something, or for something to happen.

Sexual risk-taking is common among youth aged 15-24, who not only are engaging in multiple sex partnerships but are less likely to consistently use condoms and other devices to protect against unwanted pregnancies and HIV and other STIs.

The 2017 Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey, show 47.1 of males aged 15-24 surveyed reporting having multiple partners, compared to 14.9 per cent of females. This is a significant increase over 2012 when 31 per cent and five per cent, respectively revealed they had multiple partners.

Whilst 81.2 per cent of males in the same age cohort said they used a condom with those multiple partners during sex, only 30.0 per cent of their female counterparts sought to protect themselves. The figures point to a worrying trend as in 2012, 85.7 per cent of males and 50.0 per cent of females were using condoms with those partners.

JASL's St. Ann chapter started its intervention today (Monday) at Carron Hall High School in St. Mary with rap sessions on HIV & AIDS and condom demonstrations before heading to Ocho Rios High School tomorrow for a similar session.

The business process outsourcing sector, with its high concentration of youth employees, also benefitted today (Monday) from a similar intervention from JASL's Montego Bay chapter when the group visited RTR International. The team moves to Teleperformance and Montego Bay Freezone on Wednesday and Friday, respectively, before closing out the day at the University of the West Indies Western campus.

Meanwhile, the St. Ann intervention team will take to the streets of Trelawny on Wednesday and St. Ann's Bay in the Garden Parish on Thursday with their kits providing on-the-spot HIV and syphilis tests to residents in their 'Walk, Talk and Test'.

Safer Sex Week activities will culminate with mass testings on Friday in Papine square and Mandeville, and a big fun and wellness fair in the Farm Heights community of Montego Bay on Saturday. There will be bounceabout, face painting, netball exhibition matches, a dance-off, music, giveaways and lots of fun and excitement at the fair. All activities are scheduled to start at 10:00 a.m.

JASL encourages persons to protect themselves and their loved ones by using a condom every time they have sex as well as to get tested in order to know their status. Condoms provide 99 per cent protection from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). STIs include genital herpes, genital warts, syphilis, chlamydia, human papilloma virus and hepatitis A, B, and C.

Approximately 30,000 Jamaicans are living with HIV, however, nearly 15 per cent of those infected do not know they are carrying the virus.

Jamaica AIDS Support for Life provides HIV & AIDS-related support services, free of cost, through its chapters in Kingston, St. Ann's Bay and Montego Bay.

Activities for this year's Safer Sex Week are funded by AIDS Healthcare Foundation.

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