

# Grindr, the social networking app, can be an effective way to distribute HIV home-testing kits, study finds

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A study led by researchers from UCLA found that the gay-oriented social networking app Grindr is an effective means through which to distribute HIV self-testing kits among men who have sex with men who have a high risk for contracting the virus.

The study found that advertising placed on the app has a high potential to reach untested [high-risk](#) populations and reduce the spread of HIV. Men who responded to the offer to use the self-test kit had a high risk for HIV infection and were more likely to have been tested infrequently in the past.

Because men who have [sex](#) with men are major users of social networking apps, UCLA researchers sought to determine if the popular app Grindr could be an effective way to reach certain groups of men who have sex with men who have a higher risk for HIV, in order to encourage them to test themselves for the virus. Among men who have sex with men in Los Angeles, blacks and Latinos have the highest rate of HIV infection, and black men in that group are four times likelier than white men to not know they are infected.

The researchers advertised free HIV self-test kits on Grindr for one month, targeting Los Angeles men who use the app. The ads directed users to a study website where they could choose to receive a test through the mail, through a voucher redeemable at a local pharmacy or

through a code used at a vending machine. Black or Latino men who had sex with men and who were at least 18 years old were invited to take a survey two weeks after they received the test.

The website received 4,389 unique hits and 333 [men](#) requested the HIV test—247 (74 percent) who asked for the test by mail, 58 (17 percent) via a voucher and 28 (8 percent) through the vending machine. Of the 125 self-testers who subsequently took the online survey, 74 percent reported having had at least one episode of anal intercourse without a condom in the prior three months, 29 percent had last been tested for HIV more than one year ago and 9 percent had never been tested. Among the 56 participants who reported their HIV [test](#) status, two (4 percent) were newly positive.

The study was published in the journal *Sexual Health*.

**More information:** A. Lina Rosengren et al, Feasibility of using Grindr? to distribute HIV self-test kits to men who have sex with men in Los Angeles, California, *Sexual Health* (2016). DOI: 10.1071/SH15236

Provided by University of California, Los Angeles

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