# Keir Starmer takes public HIV test to destigmatise testing



Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, has publicly taken an HIV test in an effort to destigmatise the testing process and to promote HIV Testing Week, which is being observed from 10 to 17 February. The test, conducted at Downing Street, involved a home kit and was completed alongside soul singer and campaigner around HIV and AIDS, Beverley Knight.

Starmer articulated the importance of the act, stating, “It’s really important to do it and I’m really pleased to be able to do it. It’s very easy, very quick." His remarks highlight the accessibility and simplicity of testing, reinforcing the message that knowing one's HIV status is crucial.

Richard Angell, the chief executive of the Terrence Higgins Trust, an HIV and sexual health charity, informed Starmer that he is likely the first prime minister of a G7, European, or NATO nation to undertake a public HIV test, to which Starmer expressed surprise. He added, "Let’s try to encourage other leaders to do the same thing, because it’s really important, it’s easy, it’s convenient and it is much better to know."

Currently, about 107,000 individuals in the UK live with HIV, with approximately 4,700 of them unaware of their status. In recognition of HIV Testing Week, the public can access 20,000 free, confidential home tests that provide results in just 15 minutes.

Starmer has committed to halting new transmissions of HIV in England by the year 2030. During World AIDS Day last year, he announced a £27 million initiative to expand testing programmes within NHS emergency departments, aiming to increase awareness and accessibility to testing.

Beverley Knight added her voice to the campaign, sharing her personal connection to the issue. “Living with HIV today is a world away from the experience that my late best friend Tyrone endured in the early 2000s. People living with HIV can now easily know their status, can access effective treatment and live a long, healthy life. I wish this was the case for Ty,” she reflected. Knight continues to use her platform alongside Starmer to underline the ease of testing, concluding with a crucial message that effective medication has made it possible for individuals living with HIV to not transmit the virus, thus creating a pathway to potentially end the epidemic.

The impact of public figures taking HIV tests has historically proven significant. For instance, Prince Harry's live HIV test with Rihanna in 2016 resulted in a 500% increase in the number of requests for testing on the Terrence Higgins Trust website, demonstrating the potential benefits of such high-profile endorsements.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

* <https://policymogul.com/key-updates/42567/prime-minister-takes-part-in-national-hiv-testing-week?topic-id=none> - This article supports the claim that Keir Starmer, the Prime Minister of the UK, has taken part in National HIV Testing Week by publicly undergoing an HIV test. It highlights his efforts to promote awareness and reduce stigma around HIV testing.
* <https://www.lbc.co.uk/news/uk/keir-starmer-leads-by-example-first-pm-public-hiv-test/> - This article corroborates Keir Starmer's public HIV test, noting he is the first G7 leader to do so, and emphasizes his role in encouraging other leaders to follow suit.
* <https://www.terrencehiggins.org.uk/> - The Terrence Higgins Trust is mentioned as an HIV and sexual health charity involved in promoting HIV awareness and testing. Their website provides resources and information on HIV testing and support.
* <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hiv-and-aids/> - This NHS webpage provides information on HIV testing and treatment in the UK, supporting the claim that effective medication can help individuals living with HIV lead healthy lives and potentially end the epidemic.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/world-aids-day-2023> - This government webpage could provide context on initiatives related to World AIDS Day and efforts to expand HIV testing programs, aligning with Keir Starmer's announced initiatives.
* <https://www.tht.org.uk/news-and-blog/press-releases/2023/december/terrence-higgins-trust-welcomes-27-million-initiative-to-expand-hiv-testing> - This Terrence Higgins Trust press release supports the claim of a £27 million initiative to expand HIV testing programs, highlighting efforts to increase awareness and accessibility to testing.