

LET'S STOP HIV TOGETHER

Now's the Time to Find Out About PrEP and PEP

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) can help you stay HIV negative, even if your partner might have HIV. This brochure includes useful tips on what to ask your health care provider about PrEP and PEP.

Learn more at: cdc.gov/StopHIVTogether.



Ending
the
HIV
Epidemic

PrEP: Prevent HIV Before Exposure

What Is PrEP?

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is medicine people at risk for HIV take to prevent getting HIV from sex or injection drug use.






How Effective Is PrEP?

PrEP is highly effective for preventing HIV. It greatly reduces the risk of getting HIV from sex when taken as prescribed.

- ◆ Although there is less information about how effective PrEP is among people who inject drugs, we do know that PrEP lowers the risk of getting HIV when taken as prescribed.
- ◆ PrEP is much less effective when it is not taken as prescribed.

Is PrEP Right for Me?

PrEP may be right for you if you test negative for HIV and if any of the following apply to you:

If you...	and you...
 have had anal or vaginal sex in the past 6 months	have a sexual partner with HIV (especially if the partner has an unknown or detectable viral load), have not consistently used a condom, or have been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease (an “STD,” such as gonorrhea or syphilis) in the past 6 months.
 inject drugs	have ever injected drugs (especially if you have injected drugs in the past 6 months), have an injection partner with HIV, or share needles, syringes, or other equipment to inject drugs (for example, cookers).
 have been prescribed PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis)	may continue to be exposed to HIV in the future or have used PEP more than once.

If you have a partner with HIV and are considering getting pregnant, talk to your health care provider about PrEP if you are not already taking it. PrEP may be an option to help protect you and your baby from getting HIV while you try to get pregnant, during pregnancy, or while breastfeeding.

Can Young People Take PrEP?

Yes. PrEP is approved for use by adolescents without HIV who weigh at least 77 pounds (35 kilograms) and who are at risk for getting HIV from sex or injection drug use (see *Is PrEP Right for Me?*).

How Can I Start PrEP?

Talk to your health care provider if you think PrEP may be right for you. PrEP can be prescribed only by a health care provider.

- ◆ Before beginning PrEP, you must take an HIV test to make sure you do not have HIV.
- ◆ While taking PrEP, you'll have to regularly visit your health care provider. How often these visits occur is different depending on what kind of PrEP medication you use.

If taking oral PrEP, visit your provider every 3 months for:

- Follow-up visits.
- HIV tests and other tests, as needed.
- Prescription refills.
- Access to other services, such as help with taking your medicine as prescribed.

If taking PrEP shots, visit your provider every 2 months for:

- Your regular injections.
- Follow-up visits.
- HIV tests and other tests, as needed.
- Access to other services, such as help keeping all your medical appointments.

Are There Different Types of PrEP?

Three medications are approved for use as PrEP:

- ◆ Truvada® (or generic equivalent) pills* are for all people at risk through sex or injection drug use.
- ◆ Descovy® pills** are for people at risk through sex or injection drug use, except for people assigned female at birth who could get HIV from vaginal sex.
- ◆ Apretude® shots*** are for all people at risk through sex.

Is PrEP Safe?

- ◆ PrEP is safe, but some people experience side effects like diarrhea, nausea, headache, fatigue, and stomach pain. These side effects usually go away over time.
- ◆ Tell your health care provider about any side effects that are severe or do not go away.

* emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate

** emtricitabine and tenofovir alafenamide

*** cabotegravir



What if I Need to Stop Taking PrEP?

There are several reasons why people stop taking PrEP:

- ◆ Your risk of getting HIV becomes low because of changes in your life.
- ◆ You don't want to take a pill as prescribed or often forget to take your pills.
- ◆ You don't want to take regular injections as prescribed or have a hard time getting to your medical visits to receive your injections.
- ◆ You have side effects from the medicine that interfere with your life.
- ◆ Blood tests show that your body is reacting to PrEP in unsafe ways.

Talk to your health care provider about other HIV prevention methods that may work better for you. To learn more, visit: [cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prevention](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prevention).



If I Stopped Taking PrEP, How Do I Start Taking It Again?

Tell your health care provider that you would like to start taking PrEP again. You will need to take an HIV test before you start PrEP to make sure you don't have HIV.

Can I Take PrEP Just Once, if I Think I Might Have Recently Been Exposed to HIV?

- ◆ PrEP is for people who are at ongoing risk for HIV.
- ◆ PrEP is not the right choice for people who may have been exposed to HIV in the last 72 hours.
- ◆ If you may have been exposed to HIV in the last 72 hours, talk to your health care provider, an emergency room doctor, or an urgent care provider about PEP.

Can I Stop Using Condoms if I Take PrEP?

- ◆ PrEP provides protection from HIV but does not protect against other STDs.
- ◆ Condoms can help prevent other STDs that can be transmitted through genital fluids, such as gonorrhea and chlamydia.
- ◆ Condoms are less effective at preventing STDs that can be transmitted through sores or cuts on the skin, like human papillomavirus, genital herpes, and syphilis.



How Can I Pay for PrEP?

Most insurance plans and state Medicaid programs cover PrEP. There are also other programs that provide PrEP for free or at a reduced cost:

- ◆ The Gilead Sciences *Advancing Access* program helps patients cover oral PrEP medication costs. Learn more at: gileadadvancingaccess.com.
- ◆ *ViiVConnect* offers a program to help patients pay for injectable PrEP. Learn more at: viivconnect.com.
- ◆ Some states have PrEP assistance programs. Some cover medication, some cover clinical visits and lab costs, and some cover both. Learn more at: nastad.org/prepcost-resources/prep-assistance-programs.



Talking to Your Health Care Provider About PrEP and PEP

How Do I Talk to My Health Care Provider About PrEP or PEP?

During Your Visit

- ◆ Be clear. Tell your provider that you are interested in PrEP (or PEP) right away.
- ◆ Give your provider all the details about your life that could be important to your health. If your sex life or use of injection drugs is a hard topic to talk about, say that to your provider. It will help to start the conversation.
- ◆ Tell your provider about your routine, especially things that might make it easy or hard to take a daily medication or attend regular medical appointments to receive injections.
- ◆ Share your health history. This includes any past illnesses or concerns you have, as well as a list of your current medications (including supplements, herbs, hormones, etc.).
- ◆ Ask questions. You want to be sure that you understand what your provider is telling you.
- ◆ Take notes during your visit so that you can remember what your provider said.

After Your Visit

- ◆ Review your notes and any information from your health care provider.
- ◆ Call your provider if you have more questions.
- ◆ Schedule tests or follow-up appointments your provider requested.
- ◆ Get your results if you had tests done at your appointment.
- ◆ Get treated if you have an STD.
- ◆ If you are taking oral PrEP, be sure to keep your prescription filled and take your medicine as prescribed.

PEP: Prevent HIV After Exposure

What Is PEP?

PEP stands for post-exposure prophylaxis. It means taking antiretroviral medicines after being potentially exposed to HIV to prevent becoming infected.

PEP must be started within 72 hours after a recent possible exposure to HIV, but the sooner you start PEP, the better. Every hour counts. If you're prescribed PEP, you'll need to take it once or twice daily for 28 days. PEP is effective in preventing HIV when administered correctly, but not 100%.



Is PEP Right for Me?

Talk to your health care provider or an emergency room doctor about PEP right away if you are HIV negative or do not know your HIV status, and in the last 72 hours, you:

1. Think you may have been exposed to HIV during sex (for example, if the condom broke).
2. Shared needles and works to prepare drugs (for example, cotton, cookers, water).
3. Were sexually assaulted.

PEP should be used only in emergency situations and must be started within 72 hours after a recent possible exposure to HIV. It is not a substitute for:

- ♦ Regular use of other proven HIV prevention methods, such as PrEP, which means taking HIV medicines regularly to lower your chance of getting infected.
- ♦ Using condoms the right way every time you have sex.
- ♦ Using only your own new, sterile needles and works every time you inject.

PEP is effective, but not 100%, so you should continue to use condoms with sex partners and safe injection practices while taking PEP. These strategies can protect you from being exposed to HIV again and reduce the chances of transmitting HIV to others if you do become infected while you are on PEP.

When Should I Take PEP?

PEP must be started within 72 hours after a possible exposure. The sooner you start PEP, the better; every hour counts.

Starting PEP as soon as possible after a potential HIV exposure is important. Research has shown that PEP has little or no effect in preventing HIV infection if it is started later than 72 hours after HIV exposure. If you're prescribed PEP, you'll need to take it once or twice daily for 28 days.

Does PEP Have Any Side Effects?

PEP is safe but may cause side effects like nausea in some people. These side effects can be treated, aren't life threatening, and may go away over time.

Where Can I Get PEP?

Your health care provider or an emergency room doctor can prescribe PEP. Talk to them right away if you think you've been exposed to HIV in the last 72 hours.

How Can I Pay for PEP?

If you're prescribed PEP after a sexual assault, you may qualify for partial or total reimbursement for medicines and clinical care costs.

- ◆ For more information, visit: ovc.ojp.gov/states.

If you're prescribed PEP for another reason and cannot get insurance, your health care provider can apply for free PEP medicines through the medication assistance programs run by PEP manufacturers.

- ◆ To avoid a delay in getting PEP medicine, in many cases, these applications can be handled urgently.

Can I Take a Round of PEP Every Time I Have Unprotected Sex?

PEP should only be used in emergency situations.

PEP is not the right choice for people who may be exposed to HIV frequently. Because PEP is given after a potential exposure to HIV, multiple drugs and high doses are needed to block infection.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)—not PEP—is for people who are at ongoing risk of getting HIV. PrEP is medicine people at risk for HIV take to protect themselves from getting HIV. Speak to your health care provider about PrEP if you think PrEP might be right for you.

Resources

- ◆ Find a health care provider to prescribe PrEP at: prelocator.org.
- ◆ Learn more about how to reduce your risk and get information tailored to meet your needs from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's HIV Risk Reduction Tool. Visit: hivrisk.cdc.gov.
- ◆ For more information, visit: cdc.gov/StopHIVTogether.



You can also access this information by calling
CDC-INFO at **800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)**.

LEARN MORE AT
[CDC.GOV/STOPHIVTOGETHER](https://www.cdc.gov/stopshivtogether)



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