



INFORMATION ABOUT TREATMENTS
THAT CAN STOP YOU GETTING HIV

PEP/PrEP

POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS / PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS

PEP (Post-exposure prophylaxis):

- Can stop you becoming infected with HIV.
- Must be started as soon as possible after exposure, preferably within 24 hours. It can be prescribed up to 72 hours (three days) after condomless sex, but it is best not to wait that long.
- Is available free from NHS sexual health (GUM) clinics and hospital Accident and Emergency departments (A&E).
- Involves taking anti-HIV medicines for four weeks.
- Now uses newer medication with fewer side effects.



Post

= after

Exposure

= a situation where HIV has a chance to get into someone's body eg, through anal or vaginal sex

Prophylaxis

= a treatment to stop an infection happening

So...

PEP

Post-exposure prophylaxis

= a treatment which may stop you becoming infected with HIV after it has entered your body. PEP needs to be started as soon as possible after a potential exposure to HIV. It is best to start taking PEP within 24 hours (straight away if possible) and no more than 72 hours later.

WHAT'S NEW?

The medication now used for PEP is a tablet called Truvada (which contains tenofovir and emtricitabine) and two tablets of raltegravir (Isentress). These are antiretroviral drugs commonly used to treat HIV.

PEP used to normally consist of Truvada and a drug called Kaletra (which contains lopinavir and ritonavir), but the Kaletra has been swapped for raltegravir.

Raltegravir has fewer side effects and is better tolerated. If you do get side effects from PEP they are likely to be mild ones in the first few days, such as nausea, headaches or tiredness.

IF I HAVE HIV IN MY BODY, ISN'T IT TOO LATE?

No. After HIV gets into your body, it takes a short period of time before it permanently infects you. If you start taking PEP in time you have a chance to stop HIV taking hold.

HOW DOES PEP WORK?

PEP involves taking antiretrovirals every day for four weeks. Each dose must be taken at the right time and the course must be completed.

PEP works by stopping the virus from reproducing and spreading throughout the body. Taking PEP correctly may stop HIV taking a permanent hold in your body.

WILL PEP STOP ME BECOMING HIV POSITIVE?

PEP has been shown to be highly effective in stopping HIV infection, but it does not work every time. It can fail if it is not started soon enough or not taken correctly.

IS PEP A CURE FOR HIV?

No. There is no cure for HIV. PEP can only stop HIV infecting you if it is taken in time.

HOW SOON SHOULD I START PEP?

It is best to start PEP as soon as possible after exposure, preferably within 24 hours. It can be prescribed up to 72 hours (three days) later, but it is best not to wait that long. After 72 hours PEP is not usually prescribed as it is unlikely to work.

WHERE DO I GET PEP?

The following places can prescribe PEP free of charge:

- Sexual health (GUM) clinics (on weekdays during office hours).
- Hospital Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments (at night, weekends or on public holidays).
- If you already have HIV, your HIV clinic may be able to help if the PEP is for someone you've had sex with.

Your GP will **not** usually be able to prescribe PEP.

WHO CAN GET PEP?

Not everyone who asks for PEP will need it. The doctor will carry out a risk assessment and if they think your risk of HIV infection is extremely low they may not prescribe it. If the person you had sex with is living with HIV, but on treatment and has had an 'undetectable viral load' for at least six months, you will not need PEP.

If you think you have been exposed to HIV, the best thing to do is ask for PEP as soon as possible so you can get assessed by a doctor.

PrEP (Pre-exposure prophylaxis)

- Involves taking HIV drugs before sex to stop you getting HIV.
- Is either taken every day or before and after sex.
- Involves taking fewer HIV drugs than PEP.
- Is extremely effective at stopping HIV when taken correctly.
- Is generally well tolerated.
- Is **not** currently available on the NHS in the UK. However, some people access PrEP through clinical trials, by buying generic versions of the drug online or through a private prescription.
- For up-to-date information on accessing PrEP visit: tht.org.uk/PrEP

Pre

= before

Exposure

= a situation where HIV has a chance to get into someone's bloodstream

Prophylaxis

= a treatment to stop an infection happening

So...

PrEP

Pre-exposure prophylaxis

= a treatment where HIV drugs are taken before sex to reduce the risk of getting HIV.

WHAT IS PrEP?

PrEP is a course of HIV drugs taken by HIV negative people, who are at high risk of HIV, before sex to reduce the chance of getting HIV.

Results in trials have been very successful, with PrEP significantly lowering the risk of becoming HIV positive and without major side effects.

The medication used for PrEP is a tablet called Truvada, which contains tenofovir and emtricitabine (which are drugs commonly used to treat HIV).

HOW DOES PrEP WORK?

Taking HIV medication before being exposed to HIV means there is enough drug inside you to block HIV if it gets into your body – before it has the chance to infect you.

WHEN DO YOU TAKE IT?

In clinical trials PrEP has been used in two different ways:

- Either taken regularly (one tablet per day).

OR

- Only taken when needed (two tablets two to 24 hours before sex, one tablet 24 hours after sex and a further tablet 48 hours after sex). This is often called 'on-demand' or 'event-based' dosing.

Both methods have been shown to be very effective, although on-demand dosing has only been studied in gay and bisexual men. If PrEP becomes available in the UK it is likely that both approaches will be used, depending on what is most suitable.

WHO SHOULD TAKE PrEP?

People who are at high risk of getting HIV. This includes gay and bisexual men, black Africans, trans people and those in a relationship with an HIV positive partner who is not on successful treatment.

WHERE DO I GET PrEP?

Currently PrEP is not available on the NHS, but it is available by private prescription from some sexual health clinics.

Some people are ordering a cheaper, generic version of Truvada (called Tenvir-EM) from online pharmacies.

If you are thinking about getting PrEP from outside the NHS it is really important to make sure you are HIV negative and that you talk to an adviser from a sexual health clinic. Many will support you to use the treatment safely and provide necessary tests eg, HIV, sexually transmitted infection (STI) and kidney function tests.

For more up-to-date information on the different ways to get PrEP, visit tht.org.uk/PrEP

WHAT ABOUT OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS?

Research has shown that PrEP is highly effective at preventing HIV as long as it is taken as directed. However, PrEP will not protect you from other STIs or an unwanted pregnancy – whereas condoms will.

If you are using PrEP it's important that you go for regular STI screens every three months so you can get any other infections treated.

HOW WELL DOES IT WORK?

In most PrEP studies, no one became infected if they took PrEP as recommended. But if you do not take it correctly it may not work.

The UK's PROUD study reported an 86% reduction in HIV infections in gay men taking PrEP – this figure included people who did become infected with HIV but were not taking PrEP at the time they were infected. The protection PrEP offers is thought to be near complete when taken as prescribed.

The French Ipergay study also showed an 86% reduction in HIV infections when event-based or on-demand dosing was used.

HOW SAFE IS IT?

The drugs used in PrEP are the same drugs that are prescribed to thousands of people living with HIV every year. They are very safe and serious side effects are rare. A few people experience nausea, headaches or tiredness and, rarely, the medication can affect kidney function. As a precaution people taking PrEP have regular kidney function tests.

KEEP THIS BOOKLET

**You or someone you have sex
with may need it one day.**



For more detailed information on PrEP visit:

tht.org.uk/PrEP

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tht.org.uk/PrEP

Or call THT Direct on:

0808 802 1221

between 10am-8pm, Monday-Friday.

The HIV and sexual health charity for life

Website: tht.org.uk **THT Direct:** 0808 802 1221

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