

Guide to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)



What is PrEP?

PrEP stands for **Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis**. It means taking medicines to protect you from being infected by HIV if you are exposed to the virus. PrEP works by taking one pill every day that contains 2 HIV medications, the pill is called Truvada.

Should I take PrEP?

PrEP is not for everyone. Your doctor may want to prescribe PrEP if:

- You are having sex with a person who has HIV
- If you don't know if your partner has HIV but you do know that he/she engages in risky behavior (ex. Injecting drugs or having sexual partners other than you)
- If your partner has HIV and you are trying to get pregnant, PrEP can be used to protect you and your baby from getting HIV

How well does PrEP work?

If taken daily, PrEP is effective in reducing the risk of HIV. PrEP has been tested in large numbers of people.



The time for debate on the effectiveness of PrEP is over.

Does PrEP have any side effects?

Side effects may include upset stomach, loss of appetite, or mild headache. However, side effects are generally mild and should go away within the first month. Talk to your doctor if these side effects become severe or do not go away.

How can I start PrEP?

If you think you may be at risk for HIV, talk to your doctor about PrEP. If you and your doctor agree PrEP is right for you, you will need:

- A physical exam
- Blood tests for HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, and liver and kidney function

Once you have been cleared to start taking PrEP, you can begin taking Truvada every day as prescribed. You will:

- Receive counseling on sexual behaviors
- Be required to make regular follow-up appointments and have regular blood tests
- Tell your doctor if you experience any side effects while taking this medication
- Tell your doctor if you are having a hard time remembering to take Truvada or want to stop

If I take PrEP can I stop using condoms when I have sex?

No, you should continue to use condoms during sex. If PrEP is taken daily it does protect from HIV, but it is not 100% effective, so there is still a chance of getting HIV. Using a condom will decrease that risk. PrEP also does not protect you from other sexually transmitted infections, but condoms do. For the most protection you should take PrEP daily and use a condom every time you have sex.



How long do I need to take PrEP?

You should talk to your doctor before stopping PrEP. If your risk of getting HIV becomes low because of changes that occur in your life, you may want to stop taking PrEP. If you have side effects from the medication that are interfering with your life or if blood tests show that your body is reacting to PrEP in unsafe ways, your doctor may stop prescribing PrEP for you.

If interested in finding out more about PrEP: call Confidential Phone Line: 781-715-6237