

I'M ENDING HIV

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PrEP

PATIENT INFORMATION

endinghiv.org.au/prep

**THIS BOOKLET
PROVIDES YOU
WITH
INFORMATION
ABOUT**

**Pre-Exposure
Prophylaxis
(PrEP) for HIV.**

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WHAT IS PrEP?

PrEP stands for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. Prophylaxis means “to prevent or control the spread of an infection or disease.”

PrEP is a HIV prevention method in which people who do not have HIV take a pill every day to reduce their risk of becoming infected with HIV.

PrEP contains two antiretroviral medicines that are also used to treat people who have a HIV infection, tenofovir disoproxil fumarate also known as "TDF" and emtricitabine also known as "FTC" (in combination known as TDF/FTC). These drugs suppress the virus in people living with HIV. You may know this medicine by a brand name Truvada, however there are generic forms of the drug with the same active ingredients which you may be given.

PrEP must be taken as prescribed by your doctor in order to be effective. If doses are missed it may reduce the effectiveness of the medication.

In terms of HIV prevention, you can think about PrEP in a similar way to condoms. When condoms are used correctly and consistently they provide a high degree of protection against HIV. But, if they are not used consistently, your risk of contracting HIV increases dramatically.

PrEP, like condoms, can't protect you if they're not being used!

PrEP is not a vaccine and only provides protection from HIV as long as you continue to take it as prescribed. However, unlike condoms, PrEP does not protect you against other sexually transmitted infections.

WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM PrEP?

PrEP is a HIV prevention option for anyone who is at risk of acquiring HIV.

However, people at high risk of HIV infection benefit the most from PrEP.

These communities include gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender people and heterosexual people with an HIV positive partner who does not have an undetectable viral load.

Guidelines for PrEP use have been developed by the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM). Your doctor may refer to those Guidelines when discussing whether PrEP will be of benefit to you.

If you do not fall within the recommended guidelines but feel that you would benefit from accessing PrEP, you can discuss this with your doctor.

More information can be found at: endinghiv.org.au/prep or call PrEP Info Service **1800 451 624**.

SEX BETWEEN MEN

The guidelines recommend daily PrEP for individuals at medium to high risk of acquiring HIV. The guidelines consider an individual at high risk if they acknowledge:

Being likely to have multiple events of condomless anal intercourse, in the next 3 months (indicating sustained risk)

And having any of the following:

- Regular sexual partner of an HIV-infected man with whom condoms were not consistently used in the last 3 months (HIV positive partner is not on treatment and/or has detectable viral load);
- At least one episode of receptive condomless anal intercourse with any casual HIV-infected male partner or a male partner of unknown HIV status in the last 3 months;
- Methamphetamine use in the last 3 months

SEX BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

An individual is at high risk if they acknowledge:

Being likely to have multiple events of condomless anal or vaginal intercourse, in the next 3 months (indicating sustained risk)

And

- Being a regular sexual partner of an HIV-infected man or woman with whom condoms were not consistently used in the last 3 months (HIV positive partner is not on treatment and/or has detectable viral load);

If you do not meet the criteria discussed but would still like to discuss PrEP or access PrEP still speak with your doctor or phone the PrEP Infoline **1800 451 624**.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I START ON PrEP?

If you meet eligibility criteria to be prescribed PrEP, there are a number of steps you need to follow. Once started on PrEP, you need to return to your doctor one month later, and then you will then need to come back every three months while you take PrEP.

The table below outlines what you should expect at your initial and follow-up visits:

INITIAL APPOINTMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Run through patient information• HIV, STI and other health tests• Receive prescription for one month
ONE MONTH FOLLOW UP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HIV and other health monitoring• Discuss side effects and adherence• Receive prescription for two months
THREE MONTH FOLLOW UP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HIV, STI and other health monitoring• Discuss side effects and adherence• Receive prescription for three months

You will be able to pick up your PrEP from your local pharmacy.

WHAT IF I STOP TAKING MY MEDICATION?

You can stop taking PrEP if you wish. However, if you are thinking of stopping PrEP, it is important that you discuss it with your doctor first.

THE PrEP PROGRAM

Going on PrEP isn't just about taking a pill every day. It should be considered a health program that you are taking on in partnership with a doctor.

HIV STATUS

It is essential that you are tested for HIV prior to commencing PrEP.

Starting PrEP when you are HIV positive could lead to the virus becoming resistant to antiretroviral treatments, which may reduce your treatment options in the future.

When you are tested for HIV, discuss with your doctor when your last potential exposure was, so that you can both be confident that you are not in the “window period” (the time between when an infection occurs and when it is detectable by an HIV test). Before commencing PrEP, and while using PrEP, it is important to inform your clinical team if you have any symptoms which are consistent with HIV infection, such as sweats, fevers or other flu-like symptoms.

WORKING WITH A DOCTOR

Forming a good relationship with your doctor is one of the most important things that you can do for your health. When it comes to PrEP, you are potentially going to be having some detailed discussions about your sexual practices and other relevant topics, such as alcohol and other drug use. It is important your doctor discusses these sorts of things with you so they can ensure they provide you the best care possible.

SEXUAL HEALTH CHECKS

As part of the PrEP program, regular check-ups for HIV and sexually transmissible infections (STIs) should be part of your routine.

It is recommended that anyone taking PrEP has a full sexual health check every three months.

Regular testing is the only way to be sure that you do not have an STI, as many STIs can have no symptoms. When left untreated, STIs can lead to health complications, and you can pass the infection on to your sexual partners.

A sexual health check is easy. For a complete sexual health check (including STIs and HIV), the doctor may take tests of your urine, vagina, throat, anus and blood, depending on your sexual risk and sexual practices. Your doctor will advise you which specific testing regime is right for you. If you do get an STI while on PrEP, a doctor can

assist you contacting your previous sexual partners anonymously, so that they can get tested as well.

The active drugs in PrEP also work to treat hepatitis B, so you will be tested for hepatitis B. This will allow a doctor to recommend you an appropriate treatment. Additionally, if you have not yet been vaccinated for hepatitis A and B, this is something to discuss with your doctor.

OTHER MONITORING

In addition to regular sexual health checks, there are other aspects of your health that your doctor will be monitoring. PrEP has been associated with some side effects in a small proportion of people receiving it. Your doctor will monitor you for these side effects with blood tests for kidney function.

For more information on the potential side effects of taking PrEP see page 20.

HOW DOES PrEP WORK?

When taking PrEP, the medication will build up in your system to the point where it is effective in breaking the replication cycle of HIV, which will reduce the chance that it will take hold in your body.

For more information on how PrEP works and to watch a 5 minute video that explains it all, visit: whatisprep.org

HOW SOON DOES IT START WORKING?

It takes time for PrEP to build up to levels in your body that are considered protective. The exact length of time is still not clear and is being investigated.

Studies have shown that men achieve high protection 7 days after commencing daily PrEP, if taken consistently without missing any pills.

You should wait until you have taken PrEP every day, for 7 days, without missing any tablets before assuming you are protected against HIV.

Women need to have high adherence to daily dosing to achieve full protection. You should assume that maximum protection is not achieved until after you have taken PrEP for at least 20 days, without missing any pills.

If you are considering taking On-demand PrEP (see page 16), please talk to your doctor first.

HOW DO I TAKE IT?

PrEP is most effective when taken once daily. You should try to take it at the same time each day – whenever is convenient for you.

This might be during a regular activity, such as taking it with breakfast each morning or when brushing your teeth before bed at night. You might like to set reminders on your phone to ensure you remember to take it each day.

If you have a busy or unpredictable schedule, you may want to plan other ways to make sure you take PrEP consistently. It is important to remember to take your PrEP with you when you travel or plan to be away from home for a few days. Your doctor might be able to help you to come up with strategies that are right for you.

WHAT IF I DON'T TAKE IT EVERY DAY?

If you miss a dose of PrEP, don't panic. Resume taking your pills as soon as you remember. It is not recommended to double dose PrEP. If you consistently miss doses, you may lose some of the protective benefit of taking PrEP.

If remembering to take your pills is a problem, you should speak with your doctor and friends who regularly take medications to discuss strategies to ensure you can take PrEP consistently.

ON-DEMAND PrEP

On-demand PrEP can suit people who infrequently have condomless anal intercourse or have condomless anal intercourse for short periods of time (e.g. while traveling). On-demand PrEP is not recommended for condomless vaginal intercourse as there has not been enough research to show that it offers the same amount of protection as daily PrEP. The decision about how you take PrEP should be made with your doctor.

TIPS ON PrEP USE

Here are some quick and helpful hints on how to give yourself the best chance to take your pills daily, so you get the maximum benefit from the treatment.

- Reminders, either in your phone or a beeper, which you can get from a pharmacy, can be your little nudge to remember. These are easy to set and a great way to help you remember to take your pills.
- Pill boxes can also help you keep track of when you have taken your meds. A seven day a week pill box can be purchased in most pharmacies.
- Keep your pills in a convenient place. Having your pills close by will make taking them easy. They should be stored at room temperature, out of direct sunlight.
- Plan ahead. If you are having a night out or travelling, take five minutes to plan how that will affect your PrEP program. It is usually easy to find a discrete place to take them with a drink. If travelling overseas, work out the best time to take them and be sure to pack some in your carry-on luggage.
- If you drink or use drugs, remembering might be a little tricky. Carry your next dose with you and do your best to take it close enough to the time you normally would.
- Practice with things like vitamins, supplements or even with something as simple as a Tic-Tac to get you in the habit of taking a pill regularly.

SHOULD I KEEP USING CONDOMS?

When PrEP is taken daily it is highly effective in preventing HIV. PrEP gives protection against HIV transmission that is as good as or better than condoms. It is important to remember that PrEP does not prevent the transmission of other STIs. It is important to test regularly and treat STIs if you acquire them. Using condoms remains the best way to protect against the transmission of most STIs.

NEGOTIATING SEX AND DISCLOSURE OF PrEP USE

Depending on what other risk reduction practices you use, including condoms, you may find yourself negotiating sex and risk where your PrEP status becomes relevant.

How this is negotiated will depend on whether you are with a regular or casual sexual partner. If you talk about PrEP with your sexual partners, friends and family, you may find yourself becoming an educator in certain situations. Sometimes this may be a welcome opportunity, while at other times it may become a more difficult task. This type of informal community education is something that many people with HIV have been dealing with for some time. So if you have any HIV positive friends, it might be worth asking them about the strategies they use.

If you want to refer people to more information, this booklet is available online at: endinghiv.org.au/prep

PrEP is still new and not well understood across the community. Often a frank and open discussion or referring to accurate information can help educate and reassure people. It is important to remember that taking PrEP is a responsible step that someone takes to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV.

For HIV positive partners of people on PrEP, the legal requirement for disclosure of being HIV positive under the Public Health Act has not changed. There has not been a test case to determine whether the partner being on PrEP would constitute taking "reasonable precautions" as a legal defense.

For more information on the legal requirements about disclosure of HIV status you can go to:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/phact/Pages/pha-s79.aspx>

Living Positive Victoria, in partnership with the Victorian AIDS Council, has developed a guide for people with HIV on how to talk about PrEP with their HIV negative friends and partners and this can be accessed at:

<http://livingpositivevictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/TALKINGTOYOURHIV-NEGATIVEFRIENDSANDPARTNERSABOUTPREP.pdf>

PEP OR PrEP?

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) has been in use since 1996 and consists of a 28-day course of two or three antiretroviral drugs that must be started within the first 72 hours after exposure to HIV. PEP is intended to prevent HIV if exposure events are not frequent or just happened one time. If you have taken multiple courses of PEP in a short time, you should think about PrEP, as it works better for people who are potentially exposed to HIV on a regular basis. PrEP, if taken daily and consistently is a more suitable option.

SIDE EFFECTS

PrEP is generally very well tolerated and most of the potential side effects are quite mild. A minority (up to 20%) of people may experience mild symptoms such as nausea, headaches and diarrhoea. If this occurs, symptoms mostly disappear after the first few weeks or months. In a minority of cases, people have experienced more severe side effects. If at any stage you are concerned that you may be experiencing side effects from taking PrEP, you should contact your doctor.

If you have existing kidney, liver or bone problems or are taking any other medications, speak to your doctor about whether taking PrEP is the right choice for you.

If you are undertaking hormone treatments, discuss this with your doctor prior commencing PrEP, however there do not appear to be any interactions.

PrEP, PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING

For women trying to become pregnant while using PrEP it is recommended that you start taking daily doses of PrEP one month before a conception attempt and continue until one month after the last attempt to conceive. It is strongly recommended that you speak with your doctor if you are trying to conceive while taking PrEP. If you are accessing PrEP through importation and you are breastfeeding or planning to breastfeed, discuss this with your doctor immediately.

WHAT ABOUT PrEP AND ITS INTERACTION WITH THE CONTRACEPTIVE PILL?

There is some evidence to suggest that taking antiretroviral (ART) medicines, such as those used for PrEP, may decrease the effectiveness of the oral contraceptive pill. However what we know about the interaction between ART and oral contraceptive pills is quite limited. If you are on the oral contraceptive pill at the time of starting PrEP, raise this with your doctor.

REFERRALS TO OTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

PrEP has been available for use in the United States since 2012 and a number of organisations and individuals have been providing information about PrEP and the experience taking it.

Please note that some of the information contained in these websites is specific to the US.

These are intended to supplement your knowledge about PrEP but the best way to find out more about using PrEP in NSW is to talk to your doctor.

The following websites contain more info and the experiences of people taking PrEP:

endinghiv.org.au/prep

men.prepfacts.org

whatisprep.org

betablog.org/tag/prep

truvada.com

For more information about PrEP
call the
PrEP Info Service **1800 451 624**

