

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

Fast Facts:

- By taking certain HIV medicines called “antiretrovirals,” HIV infection can be blocked.
- **It’s not clear how long it takes for PrEP to work after starting it.** The medicine **should be taken every day** so that it doesn’t stop working to block HIV.
- PrEP medicine works best when other HIV risks are lower too.

What are HIV and PrEP?

- HIV stands for “Human Immunodeficiency Virus.”
 - Human (only in people)
 - Immunodeficiency (when your body’s system that fights diseases is weak)
 - Virus (a cell that gets into your body and causes you to be sick).
- **PrEP stands for “Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis”**
 - Pre (before)
 - Exposure (contact)
 - Prophylaxis (block, prevent, or protect)
- For now, the only Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved medicine for PrEP is Truvada®.
- Truvada® is also used with other medicines to treat HIV.

How can I get HIV?

- HIV can be spread by contact with blood, breastmilk, or sex fluids (semen or vaginal fluid) that has HIV in it. This can happen from having oral, vaginal, or anal sex without a condom, through any open sores or wounds you may have, or if you share any gear or works for injecting or snorting drugs.
- You can’t get HIV from hugging, mosquito bites, sharing household items, or swimming in the same pool as someone who has HIV. It has not been found that spit, sweat, or tears have spread HIV to anyone.

Who Should Take PrEP?

- Anyone who is at repeated risk for being infected with HIV.

How will I know PrEP is working and safe to keep taking?

- You will be tested for HIV every 3 months to make sure PrEP is working.
- You will be tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) every 3 to 6 months since having an STI increases the risk of getting HIV and can make PrEP not work as well.
- Your kidneys will be checked every 3 months at first, then every 6 months to make sure the medicine isn’t causing problems.
- Women will be tested for pregnancy every 3 months.

What are the Risks of PrEP?

- The biggest risks of PrEP are: starting PrEP when you already have HIV or staying on PrEP if you get HIV. **This is why blood draws at the lab every 3 months are so important.**
- The most common side effects are nausea and headache. Most of the time these side effects go away after up to two weeks of taking the medicine.
- Other side effects that may come up after being on Truvada® for a long time include less bone strength and/or kidney problems.

For Additional Information:

- PrEP Facts (San Francisco AIDS Foundation) – <http://prepfacts.org>
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention – <http://www.cdc.gov/std/hiv/default.htm>