

LET'S STOP HIV TOGETHER

# PrEP Is for Women

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) 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.

Learn more at: [cdc.gov/StopHIVTogether](https://www.cdc.gov/StopHIVTogether).





### What You Need to Know:

1. PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is highly effective at preventing sexual transmission of HIV when taken as prescribed. It can also reduce the risk of getting HIV from using injection drugs.
2. There are two PrEP medications approved for use by women and other people who may have receptive vaginal sex (such as some transgender men or nonbinary people):
  - Truvada® (or a generic equivalent), a pill that is taken by mouth every day.
  - Apretude®, a shot that is taken every 2 months.
3. Talk with your health care provider to learn the facts about PrEP and how you can protect yourself from HIV.

# PrEP: Prevent HIV Before Exposure

## What Is PrEP?

PrEP is a safe and effective medicine that can protect you from getting HIV from sex or injection drug use.

PrEP is a medication that is taken either by mouth or by injection, as prescribed by your health care provider. An advantage to PrEP is that it's an HIV prevention method that women and other people who have receptive vaginal sex can independently control. In fact, PrEP can help empower anyone to take control of protecting themselves from HIV.

There are different medications approved for use as PrEP, but Truvada® pills\* (or a generic equivalent) and Apretude® shots\*\* are the **only** PrEP medications approved for use by women and other people who have receptive vaginal sex.

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\* emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate

\*\* cabotegravir

## How Effective Is PrEP?

PrEP is highly effective for preventing HIV.

- ◆ PrEP 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.

## 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 don't 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.



## 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.

### **Will PrEP Interfere with My Hormone Therapy?**

There are no known drug conflicts between PrEP and hormone therapy, and there is no reason why the drugs cannot be taken at the same time.

## 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 hard time getting to your medical visits to receive your injections.
- ◆ You have side effects from the medicine that are interfering 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.html](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prevention.html).



## **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.

## **Why Do I Need to Take PrEP as Prescribed?**

- ◆ You must take PrEP as prescribed for it to work.
- ◆ If you do not take PrEP as prescribed, there may not be enough medicine in your bloodstream to block the virus.
- ◆ The right amount of medicine in your bloodstream can stop HIV from taking hold and spreading in your body.



## What Strategies Can Help Me Take PrEP Regularly?

Tips You Can Use	Oral PrEP	PrEP Injections
Match your medicine schedule to your life: add taking your PrEP medicine to things you already do each day, like brushing your teeth or eating a meal.	✓	
Try a pill tray with compartments for each day of the week, so you can see whether or not you took your pills that day.	✓	
Download a free app for your phone that can help remind you when it's time to take your PrEP medicine or attend your medical appointments.	✓	
Use a calendar to check off the days you have taken your PrEP medicine.	✓	
On a calendar, circle the date of your next medical appointment or when it's time to refill your PrEP medication.	✓	
Add a reminder on your phone or circle the date on a calendar for when it's time for your next PrEP injection appointment.		✓
Ask your health care provider if they can send you reminders before your appointments, such as by text message.	✓	✓
Talk to another PrEP user about what works for them.	✓	✓

## 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. PEP, which is short for post-exposure prophylaxis, is taking medicine to prevent HIV after a possible exposure. To learn more, visit [cdc.gov/hiv/basics/pep.html](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/pep.html).





## Can I Stop Using Condoms or Birth Control if I Take PrEP?

- ◆ PrEP provides protection from HIV but does not protect against other STDs or prevent pregnancy.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Oral, topical, and injectable birth control methods are available to prevent pregnancy and can be safely taken with PrEP.

### Can I Take PrEP While on Birth Control?

There are no known interactions between PrEP and hormone-based birth control methods, such as the pill, patch, ring, shot, implant, and IUD (intrauterine device). It is safe to use both hormone-based birth control and PrEP at the same time.

## How Can I Find a PrEP Health Care Provider?

Visit the PrEP Locator to find a PrEP provider near you:  
[prelocator.org](http://prelocator.org).

## 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](http://gileadadvancingaccess.com).
- ◆ **ViiVConnect** offers a program to help patients pay for injectable PrEP. Learn more at: [viivconnect.com](http://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](http://nastad.org/prepcost-resources/prep-assistance-programs).

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

During your visit:

- ◆ Give your provider all the details about your life that could be important to your health. Tell your provider if talking about your sex life or use of injection drugs is hard for you. It can help 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.).



After your visit:

- ◆ Call your provider if you have more questions.
- ◆ Schedule tests or follow-up appointments that your provider requested.
- ◆ If you are taking oral PrEP, be sure to keep your prescription filled and take your medicine as prescribed.

**CDC's HIV Risk Reduction Tool** shows HIV risk factors associated with various sexual activities when one partner has HIV and the other doesn't. It also provides tailored information to help you understand HIV risk factors and how to reduce your risk. To access the tool, visit: [hivrisk.cdc.gov](https://hivrisk.cdc.gov).

For more information, call CDC-INFO toll free: 800-CDC-INFO (800-232- 4636) | TTY: (888) 232-6348 or visit: [cdc.gov/hiv](https://cdc.gov/hiv) and search "HIV PrEP".

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



Ending  
the  
HIV  
Epidemic

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