

One pill a day can prevent HIV!

What is PrEP?



Pre = before

Exposure = coming into contact with HIV

Prophylaxis = treatment that prevents HIV acquisition

Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a pill that can be taken once a day to help prevent human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that can sometimes evolve into acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). PrEP helps prevent the acquisition of HIV similar to how birth control helps prevent pregnancy. PrEP does this by stopping any HIV that manages to enter the body from making copies of itself. It does not prevent any sexually transmitted infections (STIs) other than HIV. PrEP is different than post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), which is used to prevent the acquisition of HIV after someone has come in contact with the virus, often used in emergency situations such as after a sexual assault or an occupational needle stick injury.

Taking PrEP means taking one pill that contains two drugs; emtricitabine (200mg), and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (300mg) or the brand name Truvada. Much of the research of PrEP's efficacy has focused on its effectiveness among queer men. Studies done with queer men and cisgender, straight men and women, suggest that PrEP is between 84-92% effective at preventing HIV if taken daily.

For PrEP to be absorbed in rectal tissue, it must be taken consistently for at least 7 days. Therefore, if you are having anal sex, it will take at least 7 days for there to be enough PrEP in your system to prevent HIV acquisition. If you have a vagina/front hole, PrEP can take up to 21 days to be effective at preventing HIV acquisition through vaginal/front hole sex. If you wish to stop taking PrEP, your doctor might recommend that you continue taking it for about a month after your last potential exposure to HIV.

PrEP & Transpeople

The research on PrEP as an HIV prevention method for transpeople is limited. Further research is needed to understand whether or not there is a relationship between hormones used for transition and PrEP. According to the World Health Organization, no interactions between hormones and PrEP have been reported to date. Some research has been done with transfeminine folks, but due

to structural barriers such as violence and inadequate access to stable housing, it has been difficult for some transpeople to take PrEP every day, which has made researching PrEP's impact difficult. There is a gap in research pertaining to the absorption of PrEP in body parts that have had surgeries, such as phalloplasties or vaginoplasties. Research is also needed to better understand the effectiveness of PrEP in body parts that are sometimes called intersex.

Why PrEP?

PrEP can be an option for anyone's safer sex toolkit, including people who are at increased systemic risk for HIV acquisition. This includes people who:

- Enjoy chemsex (use drugs while you are having sex), because sometimes during chemsex we are less likely to use other safer sex methods such as condoms
- Use injection drugs because sometimes the tools we use to inject drugs could be carrying HIV
- Prefer barebacking (have condomless anal sex)
- Prefer condomless vaginal/front hole sex
- Engage in sex work because stigma and criminalization associated with this work increases rates of violence perpetrated against people who do sex work. Factors related to street-based survival sex work may also compromise a person's ability to negotiate condom use in some cases.
- Are in a serodiscordant relationship (a relationship where one or more people are HIV negative and one or more people are HIV positive)

PrEP & Health

You must first be tested for HIV and have a negative test result in order to get PrEP. Once you are on PrEP, you have to be tested for HIV and other STIs every three months. This is because if you contract HIV while you are on PrEP, your HIV may become resistant to the drugs used for PrEP. For more information, please visit: <http://catie.ca/en/fact-sheets/prevention/pre-exposure-prophylaxis-prep>

Many people tolerate PrEP very well; however, some people experience side effects that impact their kidneys, liver, and/or bone health. For this reason, it is important to ask your doctor to monitor your kidney, liver and bone health when you are on PrEP. These side effects were found reversible after stopping PrEP. Alcohol and recreational drugs are not known to interact with the current drug used for PrEP.

Some people take PrEP "on-demand," which means taking the drug when a sexual encounter occurs rather than taking it every day. Limited research has shown that on-demand PrEP reduces the risk of HIV transmission among queer men. In the IPERGAY trial, participants took two pills at once 24 hours before the first sexual activity, followed by one pill taken daily

until 48 hours after the last sexual activity. The study found an 86% reduction in the risk of HIV acquisition. On-demand PrEP has not been evaluated in populations other than queer men.

Of the available research, the strongest evidence for the prevention of HIV acquisition is in taking one pill for PrEP every single day. The iPrEX study found that taking PrEP every day, (7-days per week), provided the best protection from sexual transmission of HIV.

How To Get PrEP

PrEP in London

Any doctor or nurse practitioner can prescribe PrEP, *it does not have to be a specialist*. You may have to educate your doctor, as some doctors do not know what PrEP is. The *Sex You Want* campaign has a list of doctors and clinics in Ontario with health care providers who are knowledgeable about PrEP and are willing to prescribe it. You can find this list at:

<http://thesexyouwant.ca/prep/where-to-get-prep/>

Here are some places where you can access PrEP in London:

Middlesex-London Health Unit

50 King Street (just past Budweiser Gardens)

519.663.5446

<https://www.healthunit.com/london-sti-clinic>

Infectious Diseases Care Program

St Joseph's Hospital, 268 Grosvenor St, B3-030 (Central Registration Desk)

519.646.6207

<https://www.sjhc.london.on.ca/infectiousdiseases>

Generic PrEP

The brand name of the medication used for PrEP is Truvada. However, a generic drug that can be used for PrEP can now be purchased in Canada. Without insurance, the brand name drug can cost approximately \$1000 per month. By contrast, the generic drug can be purchased for anywhere between \$250-500. Therefore, PrEP can be a good option for those who have drug coverage.

Generic PrEP in the USA:

Before the generic PrEP drugs were available in Canada, some people accessed them from the United States. Drugs cannot be mailed from other countries to Canada, so people would order the generic brand from manufacturers in other countries (such as India), to a Post Office Box in the United States and then drive to the United States and import a three-month supply to Canada by car. It is not clear if this is considered legal activity, as it is possible to interpret the law in a way that does not allow for this method of accessing PrEP. Sometimes Border Security Agents will not allow people to cross the border for the purpose of accessing PrEP. However, this method allows users to get PrEP for as cheap as \$45 per month, and therefore some people throughout Canada choose to access PrEP this way. For more information on this method, visit:

www.thesexyouwant.ca/prep or www.daviebuyersclub.com

PrEP Coverage

PrEP is available for coverage under the Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program. People who access the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), Ontario Works (OW) and seniors are available for coverage. It is also available for partial coverage through the Trillium Drug Plan (TDP), though service users will be required to pay a deductible. There is no restriction on providers of PrEP, which means the drug does not have to be prescribed by a specialist in order to be eligible for coverage through ODB or TDP. For more information on Trillium drug coverage please visit: www.HIVnow.ca

PrEP is also covered for those with federal health insurance, such as members of the armed forces and some refugees. PrEP can also be covered for First Nations and federally recognized Inuit people, who have a Status Card* through the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program (NIHB). As of January 2018, PrEP will be covered for people under the age of 25 in Ontario under the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP+) program.

*Please note that you may be denied NIHB coverage if your Status Card is expired.

Websites about PrEP in Ontario & Canada:

<http://thesexyouwant.ca/prep/>

<https://prepontario.org/>

<http://www.catie.ca/en/fact-sheets/prevention/pre-exposure-prophylaxis-prep>

<https://thevillagepharmacy.ca/prep/>

http://www.getpreped.ca/access_to_prep_now

<https://daviebuyersclub.com>

<http://checkhimout.ca/prep-and-pep-overview-and-resources/>

<http://medsexpert.ca/>

https://www.facebook.com/groups/prepcanada/?ref=br_rs

<http://www.ctac.ca/our-issues/prep>

<http://www.prepwatch.org/>

<http://hivnow.ca/what-is-prep/>

For More Information, Contact:**Regional HIV/AIDS Connection**

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