PrEP

Protecting yourself from HIV/AIDS

There are different ways to protect yourself from getting HIV/AIDS. Using condoms when you have sex is the most common way. This factsheet explains an extra way to protect yourself. It's called PrEP.

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What is PrEP?

PrEP stands for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. This is a way of protecting yourself from getting HIV by taking a tablet once a day every day.

PrEP does not prevent you from other infections that you can get when having sex, so it is still important to use condoms to be protected from these.

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Who is PrEP for?

PrEP is recommended for people who are at high risk of getting HIV.

You are at high risk if you:

- Are a man who has anal sex with other men and do not always use a condom.
- Have a heterosexual partner who has HIV and you want to have a baby.
- Are someone whose partner has HIV, but is not taking HIV medication, and you don't always use a condom.

PrEP can help you to worry less about getting HIV.

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How well does PrEP protect me from getting HIV?

PrEP works very well if you take it every day. You should try to take it at the same time each day.

If you don't take the tablets every day, you may not be as well protected against HIV. Your doctor can give you more information.

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How long do I have to take PrEP before I'm protected from getting HIV?

This depends on the type of sex you are having. If you are a man who has sex with men, you will be protected after taking PrEP every day for 7 days.

If you are a woman, you will need to take it every day for 20 days before you are protected. Your doctor can give you more information.

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Does PrEP have side effects?

Not everyone will have side effects. Most people won't have any.

Side effects can include nausea, dizziness, headaches, tiredness, stomach cramps and diarrhoea. Usually, these stop after a few weeks. If they last longer you should see your doctor.

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Are there any long - term side effects?

Most people who take PrEP do not have any serious problems. However, taking PrEP for a long time can affect your kidneys, so it's important that these are checked. Your doctor will do a blood test every three months while you are taking PrEP to check this.

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If I take PrEP do I have to take it forever?

No, you don't. You can stop and start PrEP as your life and risk of getting HIV changes. You should only take PrEP during the times you are at high risk of getting HIV.

For example: you might take PrEP when you are having a lot of different sexual partners or you are trying to have a baby. You can stop taking PrEP when that changes.

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Can I take PrEP if I am trying to get pregnant?

Yes, you can. If you are trying to get pregnant and your partner has HIV, you can take PrEP to protect yourself and your baby from HIV.

To be protected from HIV you must take PrEP every day for 20 days before you and your partner have sex without a condom. You must take it every day while you are trying to get pregnant and keep taking PrEP for 30 days after the last time you have sex without a condom.

Taking PrEP will not stop you from getting pregnant.

If you are a woman with HIV and your partner does not have HIV, your partner can take PrEP to protect himself when you have sex without a condom. Your doctor can give you more information.

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Can I take PrEP if I am taking other medications?

Yes. It's usually safe to take PrEP and other medications at the same time, but you should always check with your doctor.

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How can I get PrEP?

To get PrEP you need to see a doctor who is experienced in HIV to find out if PrEP is right for you.

The doctor will ask you questions about your sexual life to see if you are at high risk of getting HIV. The doctor will keep your personal information private and confidential.

If you are at high risk, the doctor will do:

- A HIV test. If this shows that you already have HIV, you should not take PrEP.
- A hepatitis B test. If you have chronic hepatitis B you may need to see another specialist doctor before you know if you can take PrEP.
- Kidney tests (blood tests), as these can be affected by the PrEP medication.

- Tests for other infections you can get from having sex.

If PrEP is right for you, the doctor will give you a prescription and explain the different ways that you can get PrEP.

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How can I get more information about PrEP?

The NSW Sexual Health Info Link is a phone service that can:

- Give you more information about PrEP and the EPIC study
- Help you understand if PrEP is right for you
- Help you find a doctor who is experienced in HIV and who knows about PrEP

If you want to talk in your own language, call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450, ask for an interpreter in your language and then ask them to call the NSW Sexual Health Info Line on 1800 451 624.

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[TEST OFTEN] + [TREAT EARLY] + [STAY SAFE] = ENDING HIV 2020