

PrEP



What is PrEP?

PrEP stands for '**pre-exposure prophylaxis**'. It's a medicine that you take regularly which can stop you from getting HIV. It does this by preventing HIV from entering cells in your body.

Note, **PrEP doesn't protect you from pregnancy or other sexually transmitted infections** (STIs).

PrEP and PEP are not the same thing. PEP is a medicine you take very soon after you might have come into contact with HIV.

[Click here to find out more about PEP](#)

Do I need to take PrEP?

PrEP can be helpful **if the sex you're having is not always as safe as you would like it to be**, especially if you sometimes find it difficult to use condoms.

If you've taken PEP in the past, it might be a good idea to think about whether taking PrEP would be right for you.

When do I need to take PrEP?

Most people who take PrEP take it as tablets each day. You need to have PrEP in your body both **before and after you might come into contact with HIV**.

For gay and bisexual men there is also something called '**on-demand PrEP**' which involves only taking PrEP at certain times. If you're interested in this, you should speak to your doctor about if it would be right for you, and how to do it safely.

PrEP isn't the right choice for everyone, for example, it might not be suitable for you if:

- you always use condoms
- you know your partners definitely don't have HIV
- you will find it difficult to take pills regularly
- you don't want to go to regular medical appointments.



How can I get PrEP?

In the UK, **you can get PrEP for free** from a sexual health clinic.

Before PrEP is prescribed **you will be asked some questions** to help the doctor understand if it's right for you. **You will also need to take an HIV test** to make sure you don't have HIV.

What questions will I be asked?

At the health clinic, you will be asked questions about the type of sex you're having or planning to have. You will also be asked about your sexual partners. You might feel worried or embarrassed when you answer some of these questions, but don't worry, doctors and nurses are used to talking about these things.



I'm under 16, will my parents be told?

You don't have to tell your parents or carers that you are planning to take PrEP if you don't want to.

However, if you don't want them to know, the doctor or nurse you speak to needs to be sure that **you understand all the necessary information** given to you before you are prescribed PrEP. They also need to think about the risk of giving you this medicine compared to your risk of getting HIV.

If the doctor or nurse is worried about the reason you need PrEP, for example, if they think you might be being abused, **they might need to speak to other professionals**, for example, social services.

What medicine will I be given?

Most people who take PrEP take daily tablets that contain medications called **emtricitabine** and **tenofovir disoproxil**, sometimes known by the brand name *Truvada*.

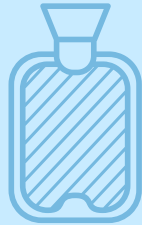
There is also a different type of PrEP tablet and an injectable version of PrEP, but **these aren't yet easy to get hold of.**



Does PrEP have side effects?

Taking PrEP can have **side effects**. These are usually mild and **go away after a few weeks**. The most common side effects are:

- feeling sick (nausea)
- feeling tired
- diarrhoea
- tummy problems
- headaches.



PrEP can also have side effects that you can't see or feel yourself. This is why it's important to go to regular check-up appointments where your doctor can monitor your kidneys and bones.

What if I forget to take PrEP?

If you are taking daily PrEP and you forget to take a dose, you should take it **as soon as you remember**. However, if it's already close to the time you are due to take your next dose, **you shouldn't take two tablets together**. Instead, just take your usual dose.

If you have been taking PrEP for at least a week, one or two missed doses every now and again shouldn't be a problem. This is because **there should be enough medicine in your system to keep you protected**.

However, if you find that you are missing lots of doses of PrEP, you should **speak to a doctor or nurse** at a sexual health clinic. They can support you to take PrEP or talk to you about other ways to keep yourself protected that might work better for you.

If you think you might be at risk of HIV because you forgot to take PrEP, you might be able to take PEP. [Find out more about PEP here](#)

How long do I take PrEP for?

You can take PrEP for **as long as you think you need it**. If you no longer feel at risk of contracting HIV, you can talk to clinic staff about stopping PrEP. You'll be able to start taking it again in the future if you need to.

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www.chiva.org.uk/my-medicine-my-health



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Chiva is a charity which works in the UK and Ireland to ensure children and young adults growing up with HIV become healthier, happier and more in control of their own futures.

aidsmap is a UK-based charity which changes lives by sharing independent, accurate, and accessible information about HIV and AIDS.