



LET'S STOP HIV TOGETHER

# PrEP Medication Guide: Reduce Your Risk of Getting HIV

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) is a medicine that helps reduce your risk of getting HIV. This brochure provides information on how PrEP prevents HIV, its side effects and safety, paying for PrEP, and available resources.

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



Ending  
the  
HIV  
Epidemic

# Take Charge of Your Health With PrEP and Prevent HIV

PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. The definition of “prophylaxis” is an action to prevent disease. The goal of PrEP is to prevent HIV infection from taking hold in your body by taking medicine before you are exposed to the virus.

PrEP is a medicine prescribed to people who do not have HIV but are at risk for getting it:

- ◆ PrEP is highly effective for preventing HIV. It 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.



Three medications are approved for use as PrEP:

- ◆ Truvada® (or generic equivalent) pills\* are for all people at risk through sex or injection drug use.
- ◆ Descovy® pills\*\* are for people at risk through sex or injection drug use, except for people assigned female at birth who could get HIV from vaginal sex.
- ◆ Apretude® shots\*\*\* are for all people at risk through sex.

## How Should This Medicine Be Used?

- ◆ You must take PrEP as prescribed for it to be effective.
- ◆ Do not stop taking PrEP without talking to your health care provider. If you are taking PrEP pills and your supply of medicine starts to run low, contact your provider or pharmacy to get more.
- ◆ You will be at higher risk of getting HIV if you miss multiple doses or stop taking PrEP than if you take it as prescribed.

\* emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate

\*\* emtricitabine and tenofovir alafenamide

\*\*\* cabotegravir



## What Side Effects Can This Medication Cause?

Most people do not have side effects while taking PrEP. However, you might experience some of the following when you begin taking the medication:

- ◆ Upset stomach.
- ◆ Headache.
- ◆ Vomiting.
- ◆ Loss of appetite.

These side effects usually fade during the first month of taking PrEP. Tell your health care provider if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away.





## What Should I Do if I Forget a Dose?

If you are taking PrEP pills:

- ◆ Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule.
- ◆ Do not take a double dose of PrEP pills to make up for a missed one.
- ◆ An occasional missed dose of PrEP pills will not greatly impact overall effectiveness, but it is important to take the medicine as prescribed. If you miss doses frequently, talk to your health care provider.

If you are taking PrEP shots:

- ◆ If you miss a medical appointment to receive your PrEP injection, talk to your health care provider to reschedule your visit.

## 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 Stop Using Condoms if I Take PrEP?

- ◆ PrEP provides protection from HIV but does not protect against other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- ◆ 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.



## What Other Information Should I Know About PrEP?

Call your health care provider immediately if you have any unusual problems while taking your medication or if you have any of the following: fever or chills (especially with sore throat), cough, rash, or other signs of infection.

If you are taking PrEP pills:

- ◆ Do not let anyone else take your PrEP pills.
- ◆ Store your PrEP pills in a secure container, tightly closed, and out of reach of children.
- ◆ Keep your PrEP pills at room temperature and away from excessive heat and moisture.

If you are taking PrEP shots:

- ◆ If you miss multiple PrEP injections, there may not be enough medication in your body to protect you from HIV. Use other prevention methods, such as condoms, or talk to your health care provider about other options.

## If I Am Not at Ongoing Risk for Getting HIV, Can I Take PrEP Pills Only When I'm at Risk?

Taking PrEP pills only when you are at risk for getting HIV is known as “on-demand” PrEP. Other names for it include “intermittent,” “non-daily,” “event-driven,” and “off-label” PrEP use. Anyone considering on-demand PrEP should discuss it with their health care provider.

- ◆ The type of on-demand PrEP that has been studied is the “2-1-1” schedule. This means taking 2 pills 2-24 hours before sex, 1 pill 24 hours after the first dose, and 1 pill 24 hours after the second dose.
- ◆ There is scientific evidence that the 2-1-1 schedule provides effective protection for gay and bisexual men who have anal sex without a condom.
- ◆ We don't know how on-demand PrEP works for heterosexual men and women, people who inject drugs, and transgender people.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends daily use of PrEP pills. Taking PrEP pills once a day is currently the only way to take PrEP pills that is approved by the US Food and Drug Administration to prevent HIV.

### If Problems with Alcohol or Other Substances Are Getting in the Way:

Talk to your health care provider.

Seek treatment if you are ready. To find alcohol and substance use treatment facilities and programs near you, visit: [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](https://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov).

Use support groups and programs to stay on track.

Seek counseling to support your mental health.

Choosing to stop using drugs or alcohol is not easy, but it can be done. Quitting will improve your health, wellbeing, and relationships with others.

## 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:

- ◆ *Ready, Set, PrEP* makes oral PrEP medication available at no cost to those who qualify, regardless of income. Learn more at: [readyssetprep.hiv.gov](https://readyssetprep.hiv.gov).
- ◆ The Gilead Sciences *Advancing Access* program helps patients cover oral PrEP medication costs. Learn more at: [gileadadvancingaccess.com](https://gileadadvancingaccess.com).
- ◆ *ViiVConnect* offers a program to help patients pay for injectable PrEP. Learn more at: [viivconnect.com](https://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](https://nastad.org/prepcost-resources/prep-assistance-programs).

## Other PrEP Resources

- ◆ Find a health care provider to prescribe PrEP at: [prelocator.org](https://prelocator.org).
- ◆ Learn more about how to protect yourself and get information tailored to meet your needs from CDC's HIV Risk Reduction Tool. Visit: [hivrisk.cdc.gov](https://hivrisk.cdc.gov).
- ◆ For more information, visit: [cdc.gov/StopHIVTogether](https://cdc.gov/StopHIVTogether).

You can also access this information by calling  
CDC-INFO at **800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)**.



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



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