

FACTSHEET: PrEP

(Pre-Exposure HIV Prophylaxis)



What is PrEP?

Pre-Exposure HIV Prophylaxis or PrEP is a medication taken in advance of an at-risk sexual act to prevent an HIV negative person from acquiring HIV infection.

Only one PrEP medication is available in Australia containing a combination of two medications: Tenofovir Disoproxil and Emtricitabine. PrEP was previously known by the brand name Truvada but is now prescribed generically as Tenofovir Disoproxil and Emtricitabine.

PrEP has been available on the Australian PBS schedule since April 2018, meaning that it is subsidised and low cost for Medicare holders. It has shown to be highly effective at reducing the risk of HIV transmission.

Who could benefit from PrEP?

Anyone who is at a higher risk of acquiring HIV infection. These will include: men who have sex with other men, transgender people, female sex workers, or anyone with a partner who is HIV positive.

Who shouldn't be prescribed PrEP?

Generally, PrEP is very well tolerated and has some mild side effects (nausea, diarrhoea, headaches etc). Tenofovir should not be prescribed if there are kidney problems (renal failure). Caution may be used in people who have osteoporosis and/or liver disease.

Protecting against sexually transmitted infections (STD's).

PrEP only protects against HIV. Only condoms reduce transmission of other STIs such as Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea and Syphilis. It is important that a full STI screening is performed every three months for those at risk.

Starting on PrEP.

A consultation is performed with the doctor to ascertain any risks, and to check for any cautions or contraindications that may affect you or the medication's effectiveness. PrEP is safe to use during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. There are no interactions between PrEP medications and contraceptives.

It is routine to perform a full check for sexually transmitted infections and tests to check kidney function before prescribing PrEP. It is important to have a negative HIV test before commencing the medication as taking PrEP whilst HIV positive can mean that the HIV is insufficiently treated, and may develop a resistant strain of HIV.

A follow-up HIV test is recommended 1 month after starting PrEP.

Taking PrEP: Daily

The most effective way to take PrEP is by taking one tablet every day, ideally at the same time each day. Maximum effectiveness for men is achieved after the first 7 days of taking the medication if there are no missed pills. Women need 20 days of consistent daily PrEP to have maximum protection. Missing pills can lower the effectiveness of the medication.

Taking PrEP: On demand

On demand dosing is only suitable for men having sex with men (MSM), whose sexual activity is infrequent e.g. occurs only when travelling. Females and trans-men require a daily regime to give them adequate protection. On demand dosing is not suitable for MSM having frequent or unpredictable intercourse. On demand PrEP regimes should also not be used by those who have chronic Hepatitis B infection.

- Two Tenofovir/ Emetricitabine tablets are taken between 2-24 hours before anticipated exposure to HIV
- If an episode of sex that risks HIV exposure occurs, then another tablet is taken 24 hours after the first dose, followed by another tablet is taken 24 hours after that
- If another sex episode that risks HIV exposure occurs, the tablets should be continued at once daily dosing until two days (48 hours) after the last exposure.

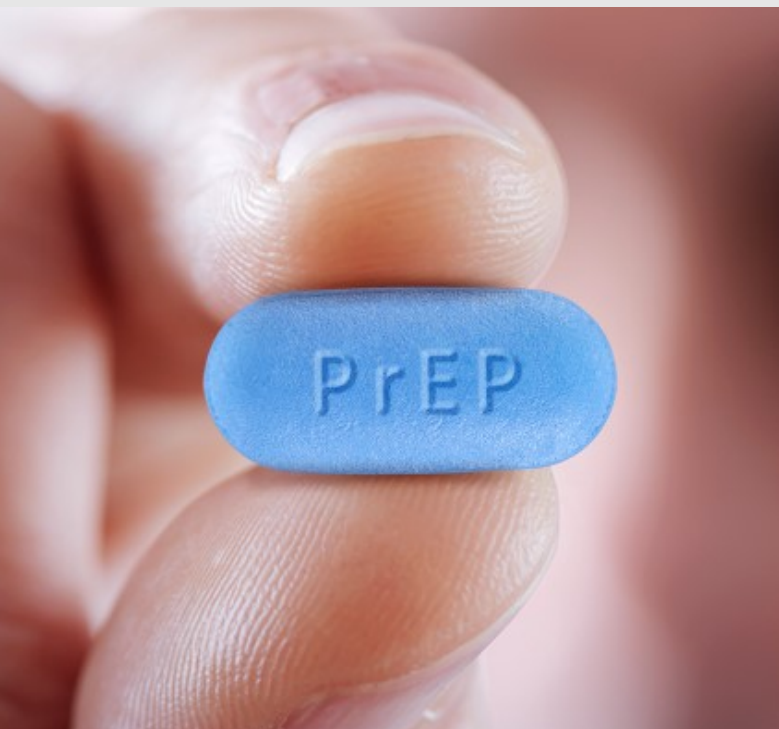


Ongoing monitoring

You should see your doctor every three months for a check-up, HIV test, STI screen and a new prescription of PrEP medication.

Prescriptions for PBS funded PrEP are limited for three months at a time. This coincides with the recommended time interval for ongoing monitoring of HIV status and kidney function tests.

If you are diagnosed with HIV infection whilst taking PrEP, this needs urgent specialist treatment as the PrEP may have made the HIV more resistant to treatment.



More Information

If you have follow-up questions or a specific query that the information on this page did not cover, we encourage you to contact us. We can be reached via phone on 02 9411 3411 or via email at info@clinic66.com.au. Or, you can book an appointment at our Chatswood clinic between 8 am and 6 pm, Monday to Saturday.

References

ASHM PrEP Guidelines Sept 2019 update: <https://ashm.org.au/products/product/prepguidelines19>

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/endinghiv/Documents/prep-patient-information-booklet.pdf>

Delisting of Truvada: <https://www.ashm.org.au/HIV/PrEP/>