



PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PREP) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The City of Cape Town's Health Department now offers a new HIV preventative strategy at many City facilities. Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a powerful, safe, and highly effective HIV prevention method for HIV-negative people who feel they may be at risk of contracting HIV. For example, it can be used by couples when one partner is HIV-positive.

PrEP is an oral medication that is taken daily for 7 days before and 28 days after exposure. It is recommended to be used in conjunction with other HIV prevention methods such as condoms, counselling, and healthy lifestyles.

Q	What is PrEP?
A	PrEP means pre-exposure prophylaxis. It is a pill that involves the use of antiretroviral medications to reduce the risk of HIV infection in people who are HIV-negative.
Q	How do I know whether I should be taking PrEP?
A	<p>PrEP is recommended for individuals who are at high risk of becoming infected with the HIV virus.</p> <p>PrEP may benefit you if you are HIV-negative and any of the following apply to you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have had unprotected anal or vaginal sex in the past six months• You have a sexual partner with HIV• You have not consistently used a condom• You have been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the past six months• You inject drugs• You have an injection partner with HIV• You share needles or other equipment to inject drugs• You have been prescribed PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis)
Q	How well does PrEP work?
A	When taken every day, PrEP can lower the risk of contracting HIV by up to 90%
Q	Is PrEP safe?
A	<p>PrEP has been proven to be very safe and can be used with contraceptives and other medication. PrEP is also safe for women to use during pregnancy and while breastfeeding.</p> <p>Most adults can safely use PrEP; however, a healthcare provider will need to determine if there is a reason you should not take it.</p>
Q	Is PrEP for me?
A	PrEP is an HIV prevention choice that is person-centred. PrEP is not a lifelong medication, and can be taken when an HIV-negative person feels they are at risk of contracting HIV.
Q	How long must I take PrEP for it to become protective?
A	PrEP must be taken every day for 7 days before and 28 days after exposure. One can cycle on and off PrEP (start and stop) depending on one's current risk.

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Q	What happens if I miss a dosage?
A	The rate of protection is directly related to how the pill is taken. If you miss a dosage, you don't get full protection.
Q	If I start taking PrEP, must I take it for the rest of my life?
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Q	If I take PrEP, can I stop using condoms?
A	No, using condoms is still the best way to protect yourself against STIs and pregnancy. PrEP is an HIV prevention option that should be used in conjunction with condoms.
Q	Does PrEP protect you against other STIs?
A	No, it only protects you against HIV infection. PrEP does not protect you against other sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy.
Q	Does PrEP cause any side effects?
A	The most common side effects include headache, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting and rash. For most people, these side effects go away after a few weeks.
Q	What happens if I take PrEP and I'm HIV-positive?
A	PrEP is antiretroviral medication taken by HIV-negative persons before exposure to HIV. HIV-positive persons must consult a healthcare provider for treatment.
Q	Can I share PrEP with my HIV-positive partner, or take my partner's HIV medication to help prevent HIV infection?
A	It's important that you don't share your PrEP medication with your partner, and that you don't use HIV medications as PrEP. Sharing medication could lead to unexpected allergic reactions or side effects, and you may run out of medication when you need it.
Q	Where can I get more information on PrEP?
A	If you feel that you are at risk of contracting HIV and want to find out more about PrEP, visit your nearest health facility for more information. Currently PrEP is being offered at many City Health facilities.