

PrEP (Prevention Before Exposure to HIV)

What is PrEP?

PrEP is a way to reduce a person's risk of getting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. PrEP stands for **HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis**, meaning "prevention before exposure." Taking specific PrEP medicine while you are HIV-negative can help protect you from HIV infection if you are exposed to a person with the virus.

Is PrEP right for you?

If you have a higher-than-average risk of HIV infection, PrEP could help you stay healthy. People who are more likely to get HIV include men who have sex with men, people who do not use a condom every time they have sex, people who inject drugs, and anyone with a sexual partner who has HIV that is not adequately controlled.

What medications prevent HIV?

Currently, 2 medications are FDA-approved to prevent HIV: **Truvada** (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg) and **Descovy** (tenofovir alafenamide 25 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg). Both can be taken as a daily pill. Truvada was FDA-approved in 2012. Descovy, a newer version of Truvada, was approved in 2019.

Men who have sex with men (who don't take a PrEP medication as a daily pill) may be able to take Truvada "on-demand" using the **2-1-1** method. (Only take Truvada this way. The 2-1-1 method is not effective with Descovy). Using the 2-1-1 method, a person planning to have sex without a condom will take 2 Truvada pills 2 to 24 hours before sex, 1 pill 24 hours after the initial dose, and 1 pill an additional 24 hours later. 2-1-1 dosing is not yet FDA-approved, so talk with your healthcare provider to learn if this is a valid option for you.

Injectable and implantable PrEP medications are in development but are not available yet.



What do I need to do next?

- 1 Before starting a PrEP medication, get an HIV test, a kidney test, and a hepatitis B test. (You may not need a hepatitis B test if you have an up-to-date hepatitis B vaccination).
- 2 Take your PrEP medication as directed by your healthcare provider. Continue to use a condom every time you have sex to prevent other sexually transmitted diseases and further reduce your chances of HIV.
- 3 Get tested for HIV every 3 months and kidney problems every 6 months. Continue to see your healthcare provider every 3 to 6 months. They can keep you informed on other tests you may need.

What are the side effects?

Any medications you take have a chance to produce side effects. Serious side effects are rare in Truvada (and even less likely in the newer Descovy) but include:

- **Nausea or headache.** This usually goes away within a month.
- **Kidney problems.** This side effect is rare. Even so, blood tests for kidney function are required at least every 6 months. You may need them more often if you have other risk factors.
- **Decreased bone density.** This side effect is also very rare. The effect is mild and has been seen to reverse if the medication is stopped.

Do I still need to be tested for HIV?

Yes. You need to be tested for HIV every 3 months. Even though the risk of getting infected with HIV is greatly reduced while on a PrEP medication, there is still a small chance you could get infected. If you were to get infected with HIV, you would need to take different, stronger anti-HIV medications.

If you only took your current PrEP medication after being infected, you would not have all the medications you need. This would allow the virus to develop resistance to the medications you are taking. Developing resistance to medications would limit your treatment options in the future.

To ensure you are getting tested for HIV, your healthcare provider will likely prescribe only 3 months of PrEP medication at a time. You will need to see your provider every 3 months for both a refill and an HIV test.

Where can I learn more?

For more information about PrEP, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html>

How effective is PrEP?

PrEP medications are very effective when taken correctly.

- **Take the medication daily.** When taken daily, Truvada and Descovy prevent HIV **99 percent** of the time.
- **If you forget a dose or two, keep taking the medication as regularly as you can.** When taken 4 out of 7 days a week, Truvada and Descovy prevent HIV **96 percent** of the time.
- **If you do not use a condom every time you have sex and don't take a daily PrEP medication, talk to your provider about the 2-1-1 method** described on the previous page. It is effective **96 percent** of the time.
- **Continue to use condoms.** When taking a PrEP medication, continue to use condoms every time you have sex. This will further decrease your chance of HIV infection while preventing other sexually transmitted diseases. Truvada and Descovy only prevent HIV.

How much does PrEP cost?

The cost is usually covered by insurance, but check with your insurance company.

In cases in which medication is not covered by your insurance, there is a co-pay coupon program that can greatly reduce the cost if you qualify for the program. You can apply online and then will receive a card in the mail. Show this card at the pharmacy when you pick up your prescription.

To apply for the co-pay coupon card, visit:

<https://www.gileadadvancingaccess.com/copay-coupon-card>

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