

PrEP

Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. It means taking antiretroviral medicines (ART) before potentially being exposed to HIV, to prevent becoming infected.

How does PrEP help prevent HIV infection?

The medication historically used for PrEP is Truvada (Tenofovir disoproxil 300 mg/Emtricitabine 200 mg). The two ingredients in Truvada block important pathways that viruses use to set up infection in your body. If you take Truvada as PrEP, the steady presence of medication in your bloodstream can work to prevent the virus from establishing itself and slow the spread of HIV in your body. This medication can reduce the risk of HIV transmission by greater than 90%. Using condoms during sex in addition to PrEP provides the greatest protection against HIV. More recently Descovy (tenofovir alafenamide 25 mg-emtricitabine 200 mg) has been approved for people whose main risk is not receptive vaginal sex as this medication has not been approved in females or transgender males. This newer medication has less bone and renal toxicity than Truvada.

How should this medicine be used?

- You must take one tablet of medication at the same time every day.
- Do not stop taking the medication without talking to your provider.
- When your monthly supply of medication runs low, contact your

pharmacist to refill, so you do not miss any doses.

- You may be at higher risk of becoming infected with HIV if you miss doses or stop taking the medication every day.

How long does it take for the medication to become effective in my body?

Preliminary data from studies conducted with HIV uninfected people show that maximum intracellular concentrations are reached in blood after 20 days of daily dosing; in rectal tissue at 7 days; and in cervico-vaginal tissues at 20 days. Therefore, although the exact time frame for efficacy is still under evaluation, a time frame of 20 days to achieve a steady state is used in clinical practice.

What special precautions should I take?

- Tell your prescriber about any medications or herbal supplements you are taking, as they may interact with PrEP.
- Tell your provider if you have any liver or kidney disease.
- Tell your provider if you become pregnant or breast feed.
- There is no special diet, or any dietary restrictions while on PrEP.

What if I forget or miss a dose?

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 to make up for a missed one. If you are

missing doses every month, you need to discuss that issue with your provider.

Monitoring after starting PrEP:

Your provider will order testing for HIV and kidney function initially

- You can also be tested for other blood borne infections and STIs at initial visit.
- Upon review of your immunization history, your provider may recommend other preventative treatment/vaccines.
- Repeat blood tests for HIV and kidney function will occur at follow up visits while taking PrEP.
- Other STI testing is available as well

What side effects PrEP causes?

Possible side effects include:

- Upset stomach
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Loss of appetite

These side effects often go away during the first few weeks of PrEP. Tell your prescriber if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away.

Call your prescriber if you experience fever, chills, sore throat, cough, rash or other signs of an acute infection. These may be symptoms of acute HIV infection and continuing PREP may cause resistance to antiviral medication. Do not stop medication on your own.