

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Information Sheet

What is PrEP?

- PrEP is a strategy used by HIV negative people to reduce their risk of becoming HIV positive.
- PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis, meaning you take a medication before any exposure (sex or needle sharing) to decrease the chance of HIV infection.
- PrEP is highly effective if taken correctly, and offers higher levels of protection (over 98%) against HIV in some studies in the USA .

How does PrEP work?

- PrEP consists of two HIV medications (antiretrovirals): tenofovir DF and emtricitabine taken together in a single tablet.
- The recommended way to use PrEP is to take the medication once daily, even if you are not having sex in order to maintain protective levels in your system.
 - You should take daily PrEP for at least 1 week before you will have protective levels.
 - If you miss more than 3 days in a week, you are not protected. Protect yourself by using condoms or abstaining from sex until you have resumed PrEP for one week.

What are side effects of the medications?

- Side effects are generally rare. Tenofovir DF can be associated with a low risk of nausea, diarrhea and bloating, but these side effects usually stop after the first few weeks.
- Tenofovir DF can rarely lead to kidney damage and monitoring with a blood test is recommended every 3 months.
- Tenofovir DF may also reduce bone density (slight thinning of the bones), but this is reversed when PrEP stops. At this time, this is not thought to be a serious concern in healthy individuals, but may be important if you already have bone health problems.

I am starting PrEP, what happens now?

- You will need to undergo blood tests before you start PrEP to be sure your kidneys are healthy and to be sure you are HIV negative (PrEP can't be used by people who are HIV positive).
- **While you are waiting to start PrEP it is important to be sure that you do not have sex without condoms as this may require you to get further HIV testing and will cause a delay in starting PrEP.**
- Usually you will start with a 30 day supply of medications, and your doctor will repeat your blood tests after one month to be sure your body is tolerating the medications.
- You will then be able to get a supply of PrEP every three months. Blood tests are needed every three months to monitor you for HIV, and to check your kidneys. These tests will be necessary for ongoing renewals of PrEP.
- PrEP does not protect against other sexually transmitted infections, and condoms are recommended. Routine tests for other sexually transmitted infections should also be done every three months with your other blood and urine tests.

Stopping PrEP

- If you decide to stop PrEP, it is important that you discuss how best to do so with your doctor. If you have been using it regularly, you usually can stop if it has been more than 48 hours after your last sexual exposure.
- You will need complete follow-up testing for HIV at 4-6 weeks after stopping.
- If you choose to restart PrEP you will need an updated negative HIV test to show you are still negative