

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) to Prevent HIV

Basic facts

This handout gives instructions for taking a drug called Truvada as part of treatment to help prevent HIV before you are exposed to the virus. This type of treatment is called **pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)**.

About the Medicine

- Store your bottle of Truvada pills at room temperature.
- Truvada can be taken with or without food.
- It is OK to take Truvada when you are also drinking alcohol or using drugs.

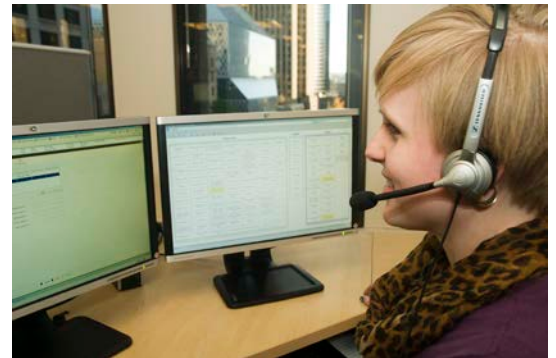
Your Dose

- Take 1 pill every day.
- **Do not miss a dose.** This treatment to prevent HIV only works if you take your pill every day.
- Do **not** take more than 1 pill a day. It will not give you extra protection. In fact, taking too many pills can be bad for your health or make you feel sick.
- People who take their medicine as prescribed and do not miss doses have higher levels of protection against HIV.
- You may have to take Truvada for a few days before there is enough in your blood for it to help lower your chance of getting HIV.

If You Miss a Dose

People sometimes forget or skip doses. If you forget a dose, just take it when you remember.

For example, if you usually take your pill in the morning, but realize at 10 p.m. that you forgot, it is OK to take 1 pill then. Continue with your usual schedule the next day.



Call the clinic if you have any questions or concerns about your PrEP treatment.

Side Effects

Some people have side effects when they first start PrEP. Symptoms are usually mild and go away after taking Truvada for about 1 month. These side effects may include:

- Gas and bloating
- Nausea
- Softer or more frequent stools

If you have nausea, gas, or bloating when you start taking Truvada, try:

- Taking the pill with a meal or a snack
- Taking the pill right before you go to bed

Call us if you have side effects. We can help.

Getting into a Routine

You may find it helpful to take your pills at the same time as something else you always do every day, such as eating breakfast or brushing your teeth.

You may also want to set reminders for yourself, such as:

- Setting an alarm on your phone
- Placing the pill bottle where you will see it every day and be reminded to take the medicine
- Using a pill box

You may want to carry extra pills with you for when your usual routine changes. This can be helpful if you stay out overnight, go on vacation, eat in a restaurant instead of at home, or skip a meal.

Clinic Visits While You Are Taking PrEP

You will need to see your doctor every 3 months while you are taking PrEP. At these visits, you will have tests to:

- Make sure you are still HIV negative
- Check for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)

If you are not able for any reason to come for these regular tests, PrEP may not be the best choice for you.

Telling Others About PrEP

Some people find it helpful to tell friends or family that they are taking PrEP. Think carefully about who you will tell. Make sure that you know the person will support your choice.

This treatment is your personal choice. You do not need to tell anyone if you do not want to.

Stopping PrEP

Whether or not you take PrEP is your choice. If you choose to stop PrEP:

- Please call us at 206.598.8750 and tell your provider about your decision. We want to make sure you understand what steps to take if you decide to restart PrEP in the future.
- Be sure to report any flu-like symptoms or rashes to your provider. They could be early symptoms of HIV infection.

Restarting PrEP

If you have stopped PrEP for more than 7 days and would like to re-start, please call us so that we can help you do this safely.

It is very important that you get an HIV test before you re-start PrEP. If you are already infected with HIV and take Truvada, the virus could become resistant to this medicine. This means that the Truvada would not work as HIV treatment for you.

Using Other Preventions Along with PrEP

PrEP is not 100% effective against the HIV virus. It also does not protect against other STDs.

To stay safe from infection, **always** use other prevention methods, such as condoms, even while you are using PrEP. Wearing condoms helps protect against STDs and HIV.

If You Have Questions or Concerns

- Call the clinic if you:
 - Have any questions or concerns about PrEP or Truvada
 - Need a refill or might run out of pills
 - Think you need to be checked for STDs
- **If you have an emergency**, call 9-1-1 or go to the hospital emergency room.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

General Internal Medicine
Center: 206.598.8750