

# Emergency HIV treatment

## POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS OR PEP

If you think you've been exposed to HIV within the last 72 hours you may be able to get treatment to prevent HIV infection.

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## What is PEP?

- ✓ PEP is a form of emergency treatment taken after possible exposure to HIV, to prevent HIV infection. 
- ✓ PEP is different from PrEP. PEP is taken *after* exposure and is not for long-term use.

## How do you take PEP?

PEP is most effective at preventing HIV infection if you take it within 24 hours of exposure. PEP can't be taken more than 72 hours after exposure.



If you think there's a chance you might have been exposed to HIV, don't delay going to a healthcare clinic.



PEP is taken for 4 weeks.



PEP should be taken at the same time everyday.

It's important not to miss any doses or your treatment may not work. 

## Where can I get PEP?

PEP isn't available everywhere, so search online to see if you can get it near you. 

PEP is only available from healthcare clinics or doctors. 

If your nearest clinic is closed (because it's the weekend, for example) you can often get PEP from the emergency department of a hospital. 

## Testing after PEP



It's important to get tested after using PEP, to make sure the treatment was successful.



Test 3 months after potential exposure, and again 6 months after.

## You might also need...

Testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or other bloodborne viruses. Speak to your healthcare provider about these.

Women might also need emergency contraception – speak to your doctor about the morning after pill or the coil. These can prevent pregnancy after sex.

It's important to use condoms while you are taking PEP. 

## Is PEP right for me?

PEP is used after sexual exposure, sharing needles or occupational exposure.

The most important thing is to make sure you take PEP within the 72-hour window.



## PEP is not taken:

- ✗ if you already have HIV
- ✗ to prevent pregnancy or other STIs
- ✗ as a regular form of HIV prevention.

If you face a prolonged risk of HIV, for example if your partner is living with HIV or if you regularly have sex without a condom, PrEP is a better choice for you.

## PEP during pregnancy and breastfeeding



PEP can be taken during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and reduces the chance of HIV being passed on to your baby.



However, some of the drugs used for PEP aren't appropriate for pregnant or breastfeeding women.



Talk to your healthcare worker for more information.

## PEP after sexual assault

PEP is often recommended after sexual assault.

Making a decision about PEP can be difficult, especially after sexual assault.

Your healthcare provider will be able to give you support and advice around this decision.

Remember:



Sexual assault is never your fault.



You have the right to report the incident to the authorities if you want to.



You have the right to be attended by a healthcare worker or police officer who is the same gender as you.



You have the right to seek emotional support.



You don't have to tell your healthcare worker what happened, unless you want to.

## PEP after occupational exposure

If you're taking PEP after being exposed at work, make sure that you let someone know about your injury. This can help your workplace to implement better precautions for the future.

## A note on side-effects

PEP is safe and not everyone will have side effects. But some people may experience feeling:

- ~ nausea
- ~ diarrhoea
- ~ headaches



If you experience side-effects talk to your healthcare worker.

It is important that you don't stop taking PEP, otherwise it may not work.



## Everyone has the right to:



- ✓ Ask about PEP
- ✓ have confidential advice and support
- ✓ refuse or stop taking PEP