

EMERGENCY HIV TREATMENT

Do you think you have been exposed to HIV within the last 72 hours?

If yes, you may be able to get treatment to prevent HIV infection.

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Next review: March 2019

References: www.avert.org/learn-share/hiv-fact-sheets/emergency-treatment



AVERTing HIV and AIDS

Charity no: 1074849



What is emergency HIV treatment?

Post-exposure prophylaxis, or PEP, is another name for emergency HIV treatment.

PEP is not a cure for HIV, it is a form of HIV prevention.

It is a short course of antiretroviral drugs that stops exposure to HIV from becoming a life-long infection.

Taking PEP



PEP must be taken as soon as possible to be effective and no later than 72 hours after exposure to HIV.



PEP drugs must be taken at the same time *every day for 4 weeks*.



PEP can cause side effects such as nausea and fatigue. **Do not** stop taking PEP – talk to your healthcare professional.

Can I get PEP?

Not everyone is given PEP, and it is not available everywhere.

A healthcare professional will advise you if they think you should take PEP. Do not assume you will be offered it.

Usually you should only take PEP if...

- ✓ it has **not** been longer than 72 hours since exposure to HIV
- ✓ you are not already living with HIV
- ✓ a mucous membrane (including: eyes, mouth, vagina, rectum) has had direct contact with someone's bodily fluid that might be infectious
- ✓ an open wound has had direct contact with someone's bodily fluid that might be infectious
- ✓ the source of exposure is infected with HIV or their HIV status is unknown.

PEP and HIV testing

It's normal to feel anxious about being infected with HIV. Don't let being worried stop you from getting an HIV test.

If you took PEP - get tested 3 and 6 months after potential exposure.

If you didn't take PEP - get tested 3 months after potential exposure.

PEP in pregnancy



PEP can be taken during pregnancy.



However, some drugs should not be used for PEP if you are pregnant.



Speak to a healthcare professional about your options.

PEP during breastfeeding



PEP can be taken when breastfeeding.



PEP reduces the chance of passing HIV to your baby via breastfeeding.



Follow the advice of your healthcare professional and national breastfeeding guidelines.

PEP after sexual assault



If you have been sexually assaulted, access urgent medical help.



A healthcare professional will advise you what to do next and they may suggest taking PEP.



Assault is never your fault. You have the right to report it to your local authority if you want to.

You might also need...



Urgent treatment for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or blood borne viruses.



Emergency contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancies:

- the morning after pill must be taken within 72 hours
- the intrauterine device (IUD or coil) can be fitted within 5 days of unprotected sex.

Emotional support, advice and counselling



Getting the right support is important before, during and after taking PEP. It can help address any concerns or fears that you might have.



Attend follow-up visits with your healthcare team regularly.



PEP must not be used as a frequent way to prevent HIV infection. Use condoms and safer sex practices to prevent sexual transmission of HIV.

Read AVERT's 'Condoms & Lubricants', and 'HIV & Safer Sex' fact sheets for more information.

Where to get PEP?

If you think that you have been exposed to HIV visit a healthcare clinic, doctor or pharmacy immediately.

You can use [NAM's e-atlas](#) to locate your nearest clinic.

Contact [i-base](#) for advice about PEP.

Visit [AVERT.org](#) for information.

Know your rights

You have the right to:



enquire about PEP



refuse PEP



have confidential support and advice



stop taking PEP.