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About oral PrEP

How oral PrEP works

##### Photo credit: Ground Picture



Oral pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is one HIV prevention   
option that participants can choose. It is a pill containing two antiretroviral (ARV) medications that can be taken by people without HIV to reduce the chance of getting HIV. The ARVs circulate throughout the body so that oral PrEP prevents HIV during vaginal, anal, and oral sex and through exposure from injection. Oral PrEP prevents HIV from entering human cells and multiplying itself. If the virus cannot multiply, it simply dies within the body.

When taken as directed, oral PrEP reduces the chances of getting HIV by up to 90%. Most people will be protected after they have been taking oral PrEP for seven days.   
For maximum HIV prevention, it is important to use oral PrEP in combination with condoms whenever possible.

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## **Using oral PrEP** **successfully**

* **TAKEN ONCE DAILY** – Take a pill around the same time each day with or without food; however, some find it helpful to take the pill with food to lessen side effects.
* Use with other forms of prevention – Oral PrEP does not prevent other sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy. It’s best to use condoms and effective contraception with oral PrEP.
* NEVER share your pills – Everyone should see their health care provider to get their own PrEP.
* Get refills on time – Collect new pill bottles every three months or as a provider prescribes. Individuals using oral PrEP will also take an HIV test at least every three months and possibly tests to check the health of their kidneys.
* STORE safely – Oral PrEP should be kept in a cool, dry place, away from children, and in a tightly closed container.
* Oral PrEP should be stopped immediately if the user has a positive HIV test result.

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## **Side effects**

* One in ten people experience minor to moderate side effects, which usually lessen with time.
* Possible side effects include diarrhea and nausea, decreased appetite, abdominal cramping, flatulence, headache, and dizziness.
* If a person experiences side effects while using oral PrEP, a health care provider can advise on how to manage them.

## **Dosing regimen**

There are two dosing regimens for oral PrEP depending on your individual characteristics, circumstances, and potential exposure routes:

1. **One regimen is for most groups of people, including people assigned female at birth, individuals taking gender-affirming hormones, and people who inject drugs with sexual or injecting exposure.**
2. *[modify/remove depending on local guidelines for ‘ED-PrEP’]* **One regimen is for people assigned male at birth with sexual exposure and who are not taking gender-affirming hormones** whether   
   for a single event, a short timeframe, or a long time.

Your provider can help you understand which regimen is right for you ­and answer any questions you may have.

­

**DAY 1**

**DAY 2**

**DAY 3**

**DAY 4**

**DAY 5**

**DAY 6**

**­DAY 7**

**DAY 1**

**DAY 2**

**DAY 3**

**DAY 4**

**DAY 5**

**DAY 6**

**DAY 7**

Continue PrEP with   
one dose each day   
for as long as protection is desired

**EXPOSED**

**DAY 1**

**DAY 2**

**DAY 3**

**Sexual exposure**

**DAY 1**

**DAY 2**

**DAY 3**

**Sexual exposure**

**Sexual exposure**

**Sexual exposure**

**Sexual exposure**

**DAY 4**

**DAY 1**

**DAY 2**

Continue PrEP with   
ONE DOSE EACH DAY   
for as long as protection is desired

**PrEP for a single event,   
e.g., sex on 1 day**

**PrEP for multiple events or daily**

**Time to start PrEP before potential** **exposure**

**Sexual exposure**

**Oral PrEP dose**

**Time covered by** **PrEP**

**Potential exposure covered by PrEP**

**Time to stop PrEP after last potential exposure**

**Continuous PrEP taking, with one dose each day**

Source: World Health Organization. WHO implementation tool for pre-exposure prophylaxis of HIV infection: provider module for oral and long-acting PrEP. Geneva: WHO; 2024. p. 8.

**Example B**

**Example A**

Tips for Using oral PrEP

Take the pill the same time every day to help with remembering—set phone reminders or align pill taking with another daily activity, such as a morning routine.

Take the pill with food or at night to help with any nausea or dizziness.

Use pill boxes for traveling around with extra pills.

Join or start a support group with friends—connect with others who can support each other to use oral PrEP well. Support groups can be in-person or virtual!

Talk to your health care provider about any questions.



## **Using PrEP is your choice!** If you want to learn more, contact [Insert your contact information here]!