

Patients' Guide to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)

What is PrEP?

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, also known as PrEP, comprises 2 anti-retroviral medications tenofovir disoproxil fumarate (TDF) and emtricitabine (FTC) and is highly effective in reducing the chances of contracting HIV infection. The use of PrEP is now recommended in national guidelines in many countries, including Singapore.

Evidence for Efficacy

PrEP is highly effective when taken correctly. Several experiments have been done to test its efficacy, which is over 90%. To know more about the various research on PrEP done throughout its history, please scan the QR code on the right.



Potential Adverse Effects of PrEP

Clinical trials provided safety information on PrEP. Some people in the trials showed mild side-effects such as upset stomach and loss of appetite, but these went away within the first month. Others experience mild headache. Generally, no serious side-effects are expected. You should tell your doctor if these or other symptoms become severe or do not go away.

Although rare, PrEP can also affect kidney function. As a precaution, people taking PrEP have regular kidney function tests.

Advantages of taking PrEP

- PrEP is extremely effective in preventing transmission of HIV when **taken properly**.
- PrEP is safe to be taken even while one is pregnant or breastfeeding. Talk to your doctor to find out more.
- PrEP is safe to take for people who are on hormone treatment (e.g. those who are transitioning gender).

Limitations of PrEP

PrEP does not provide protection from other STIs or an unwanted pregnancy, so a sexually active individual is still encouraged to go for **regular STI testing** and practice safer sex with **condoms**.

Who may be suitable for PrEP?

PrEP may be useful for someone who is HIV-negative and:

- Has a partner who is infected with HIV and is not on suppressive antiretroviral therapy
- Is at risk of getting HIV through vaginal or anal sex and does not consistently use condoms
- Has contracted STIs in the last six months
- Is a drug user who shares injecting equipment with others.

Can PrEP be taken after exposure to HIV?

PrEP is meant to reduce risk **before** sexual exposure and is suited for those with high risk of contracting HIV. For persons who may have been recently exposed to HIV, they should instead consider taking Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) within 72 hours after the exposure. Do discuss further with a healthcare provider.

How to take PrEP?

1. Daily PrEP

For MSM, heterosexual men and women, sex workers, transgender individuals

Daily dose of co-formulated TDF & FTC; needs to be taken 7 days before high levels of protection are achieved for exposure to HIV

2. On-demand PrEP

For MSM only

A double dose (two tablets) of co-formulated TDF & FTC to be taken 2-24 hours before potential sexual exposure, to be followed by single doses 24 and 48 hours after the initial dose.

What are the options for taking PrEP?

If you are considering PrEP, discuss with a doctor with experience in HIV or sexual health on your suitability.

There are two options:

- Truvada
 - Original brand combination of TDF & FTC
 - Cost: ~\$400/month
- Generic versions of TDF & FTC from a reliable online supplier
 - Cost much less than the brand name

For more information on PrEP medications, talk to your doctor, a sexual health counsellor or Action for AIDS (AfA).

You are allowed to bring in or import medicines for personal medical use if the quantity is less than or equal to 3 months' supply.

For more information on importing medications for personal use, you may visit this website or scan the QR code on the right.



Do those who took PrEP need to return for follow-up visits?

Taking PrEP will require to follow up regularly with your doctor. These appointments may include the following:

- Blood tests for HIV and other STIs to see if your body is reacting well to the medication.
- Counselling to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV.
- Advice from the doctor about ways to help you take your prescribed medication regularly so that it stands the best chance to help you avoid HIV infection.
- Updates with your doctor if you are having trouble remembering to take your medicine or if you want to stop PrEP.
- Regular STI screening as PrEP does **not** protect against other STIs like syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, or herpes.

First visit

Use a 4th generation HIV test (either conventional HIV EIA or rapid test kit). If there was a recent high-risk exposure, it is advisable not to rely on a rapid test as these are less sensitive than conventional EIA. If the last high-risk exposure was within the last 4 weeks, repeat the HIV test after 4 weeks; also check kidney function, syphilis, HBV, HCV, gonorrhoea and chlamydia tests.

Subsequent visits (Once every 3 months is advised)

HIV, syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia tests. Kidney function tests every 6 to 12 months.

Reach Out to Us

If you still have queries, feel free to call us at the following numbers:

HIV/STI Hotline (8am – 5pm)

1800 252 1324

Health Info Recorded Hotline (24 hours)

+65 6295 2944

Appointments

+65 6293 9648

You may also visit www.dsc-clinic.sg for more information, or find us at the DSC Clinic, 31 Kelantan Lane #01-16 S(200031).

Disclaimer

We have attempted to provide full, accurate, and up-to-date information in this patient information leaflet, based on current medical evidence and opinion. However, information and advice may vary from different sources and over time. If you have any further questions, do see your doctor or healthcare provider.

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