

PrEP: Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis to Reduce your Risk of Getting HIV

What is PrEP:

The definition of “*prophylaxis*” is an action to prevent disease. The goal of PrEP is to prevent HIV infection by taking medicine before you are exposed to the virus. PrEP is a medicine prescribed to people who do not have HIV infection but are at high risk for getting it. PrEP is a combination of two medicines (**combined into one pill**) to prevent HIV, which ensures you are getting the right combined daily dose for the medicine to work. The two medications that make up PrEP block the virus’s ability to start infections.

Who Should Take PrEP:

It is important to discuss with your clinician your sexual behavior and to decide together if this treatment is right for you. PrEP may be right for you if you are HIV negative and engage in an activity where there is an increased risk of HIV exposure.

These include:

People with HIV + partners

People who:

- Engage in condomless anal or vaginal (non-oral penetrative) sex
- Have multiple partners, especially partners with a penis
- Have sex with other people who are at risk for HIV
- Engage in transactional sex (sex for money, drugs, or housing)
- Have a bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- Inject drugs
- Use stimulants, such as methamphetamine during sex
- Are considering any of the above

How do I take PrEP:

- You must take one tablet by mouth every day.
- Do not stop taking PrEP without talking to your clinician. When your supply of medicine starts to run low, contact your pharmacy or clinician to get more.
- You will be at higher risk of becoming infected with HIV if you miss multiple doses or stop taking PrEP than if you take it every day.
- PrEP is highly (>90%) effective as long as you take it every day. Condoms provide additional protection against HIV, as well as most sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unintended pregnancy.

What if I Miss a Dose:

- Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it. *However, if it is almost time (within 4 hours) for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing*

schedule. An occasional missed dose will not greatly impact overall effectiveness, but it is important to take the medicine every day. If you miss doses frequently (more than 2-3 per month), talk to your clinician. **We suggest you consider setting your cell phone alarm to remind you to take your PrEP every day.**

What are the Side Effects:

- Most people have no side effects while taking PrEP but the main symptoms people report are upset stomach, headache, vomiting or changes in appetite.
- Most of the time these side effects go away within a month.
- Tell your clinician if these symptoms are severe or do not go away.

What Kind of Follow Up do I Need to Continue to Take PrEP?

At Tang we will do a series of blood tests to check your kidney **function** and to ensure you are properly immunized (certain disease such as Hepatitis can be acquired through sex), and screen you appropriately for sexually transmitted diseases at potentially multiple sites (urine or vaginal, rectal, and throat) depending on you sexual behavior when you first start PrEP.

We routinely check in with you in person or over the phone every three months to assess for potential side effects, offer repeat STI screening, and make sure that our students are safer and more empowered in their sexual relationships. Sometimes alcohol or other drugs, intimate partner violence, or financial issues get in the way of safe, consensual, and pleasurable sexual relationships. The clinicians at Tang want to make sure our patients are fully connected to UC Berkeley and local resources to help keep them safe and to fully enjoy their sexuality in whatever way they choose to express it.

Is PrEP all you Need:

Event though PrEP is one important tool for protecting yourself against HIV no method is 100% effective. While taking your PrEP medicine, you can further reduce your chance of getting HIV by using condoms during sex, cleaning injection equipment if you inject drugs, and communicating with partners about sexual safety. Although PrEP greatly reduces your risk of contracting HIV, it won't protect you from other sexually transmitted infections. Together these methods offer more complete protection.

Book an Appointment:

Log on to eTang Portal for a primary care appointment

Call Tang: 510-642-2000

Resources:

This document was based on resources from the CDC

CDC Links: <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/risk/prep/index.html>

San Francisco Aids Foundation: <https://www.sfaf.org/>

AIDS Healthcare Foundation Oakland: <https://www.aidshealth.org/>

Path To Care: <https://care.berkeley.edu/>

Healthy Sexuality Coaching: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/healthcoaching>

Gilead Coupon Program: <https://www.gileadadvancingaccess.com/copay-coupon-card>