

PrEP vs. PEP

The word “prophylaxis” means to prevent or control the spread of an infection or disease. PrEP and PEP are used to help people who do not have HIV.

PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis.

Before HIV exposure.

PrEP is used by people who do not have HIV and are at high risk of being exposed to HIV through sex or injection drug use. People taking oral PrEP need to take pills every day. Injectable PrEP is received every 2 or 6 months.

PrEP is for people who do not have HIV and:

- are at risk of getting HIV from a sexual partner
- are at risk of getting HIV from shared needles, syringes, or other equipment to inject drugs

Consistent use of PrEP can reduce the risk of getting HIV from sex by about 99% and from injection drug use by at least 74%.

Ask your health care provider about a prescription for PrEP, or use [PrEPlocator.org](https://www.hivinfo.nih.gov/locations) to find a health care provider in your area who can prescribe PrEP.

What's it called?

When is it taken?

Who's it for?

How effective is it?

How do you get it?

PEP stands for post-exposure prophylaxis.

After HIV exposure.

Taken in emergency situations, PEP is started within 72 hours (3 days) after possible exposure, is not meant for regular use by people who may be exposed to HIV frequently. You will need to take the HIV medicines every day for 28 days.

PEP is for people who do not have HIV but may have been exposed:

- during sex
- during a sexual assault
- at work (occupational exposure)
- use of shared needles or other equipment to inject drugs

PEP is effective in preventing HIV when taken correctly, but it is not 100% effective. The sooner PEP is started after a possible HIV exposure, the better.

Within 72 hours after potential exposure to HIV, get a PEP prescription from your health care provider, urgent care, or an emergency room.

For more information, visit [HIVinfo.NIH.gov](https://www.hivinfo.nih.gov).