

On-Demand Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)

What is PrEP?

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a highly effective prevention method that HIV-negative people can use to reduce their risk of getting HIV. PrEP involves taking medication (antiretroviral drugs) and attending regular appointments with a healthcare provider for monitoring and support.

What is on-demand PrEP?

On-demand PrEP is a less common and off-label alternative to taking PrEP daily. On-demand PrEP means taking PrEP medication only on the days before and after sexual activity and is used for planned infrequent sexual activity. This method is less common because it requires careful planning of sexual activity.

On-demand PrEP is sometimes referred to as 2-1-1 dosing. The 2-1-1 method involves taking **2 pills** 2 to 24 hours **before** sex, **1 pill** 24 hours **after** the first dose, and **1 pill** another 24 hours later. If sexual activity continues, 1 pill should be taken daily until 2 days after the last sexual activity. For example:

Friday 9:00 AM: Take 2 PrEP pills
Friday 10:00 PM: Sexual activity
Saturday 9:00 AM: Take 1 PrEP pill
Sunday 9:00 AM: Take 1 PrEP pill

How effective is on-demand PrEP?

One randomized control trial studied the use of PrEP among men who have sex with men (gbMSM) using 2-1-1 dosing. The study found an 86% reduction in the risk of HIV among the gbMSM participants in the on-demand PrEP group compared to those in the placebo group. No studies to assess effectiveness in other populations have been done.

Who should consider on-demand PrEP?

[The Canadian Guideline on HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis and Nonoccupational Post-exposure Prophylaxis](#) recommends on-demand PrEP as an alternative method of PrEP for men who have sex with men. On-demand PrEP may be a good choice for individuals who know in advance when they will have sex as careful planning is required. For other populations, the use of on-demand PrEP has not been studied at this time.

What PrEP medications are available and how much does it cost?

The two forms of PrEP are Truvada and Descovy. Generic Truvada is available in Canada for a lower cost. PrEP is free for people covered under the following provincial drug plans:

- OHIP+ (Individuals age 24 years and under with a valid Ontario health card)
- Ontario Drug Benefit Program, including individuals age 65 or older with a valid Ontario health card (a small deductible may be required based on income), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), and Ontario Works

If you do not have drug insurance coverage, the Trillium Drug Program can subsidize PrEP costs if you qualify. A deductible may be required based on income. PrEP is covered by most private insurance drug plans, including college and university plans. Without a drug plan, the monthly cost will vary depending on how frequently on-demand PrEP is used. If you do not qualify for drug coverage, you can visit www.gofreddie.com for free or low-cost PrEP.

What about protection from other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

PrEP does not protect against other STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, or hepatitis.

What are the safety concerns with PrEP?

PrEP is generally well tolerated by most people. Side effects are generally mild and resolve within a short amount of time as your body adjusts to the medication. Approximately 1-10% of people experience side effects such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, and dizziness.

Small decreases in kidney, bone, and liver health have been observed in a small number of people. These changes were reversible after stopping PrEP. Regular appointments with your healthcare provider are important to ensure any side effects can be managed and your response to the medication is well monitored.

What are the steps to getting PrEP?

The first step to starting PrEP is to visit your healthcare provider or the STI clinic. Your healthcare provider will take a full medical history such as any medications you are on or allergies you may have. You and your healthcare provider can discuss daily PrEP and on-demand PrEP to determine which schedule will allow you to best prevent HIV in a way that works for you.

Bloodwork will then be done to ensure that you are HIV-negative. Bloodwork will also be done to check your kidney and liver function. Additionally, you will be screened for other STIs including chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and hepatitis. Once your bloodwork has come back and is normal, you will be prescribed one month of medication.

After one month, you will have another visit with your healthcare provider to ensure that you are tolerating the medication well and have your bloodwork repeated. At that time, your healthcare provider may give you a prescription for three more months.

For more information, please contact The Clinic at 519-663-5317.

References:

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