

# Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (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.

## Who qualifies for PrEP?

PrEP can be used by HIV-negative people who are at risk of contracting HIV. This includes:

- Men or transgender women who have sex with men who report condomless sex within the last 6 months and any of the following:
  - STI, particularly if diagnosed in the last 12 months
  - Recurrent use of PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis)
  - Ongoing sexual relationship with an HIV-positive partner who may have transmissible HIV
- HIV-negative partner in a relationship with an HIV-positive partner who may have transmissible HIV and reports condomless sex
- People who inject drugs and may share drug use equipment

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

PrEP is an approved prescription drug in Canada. 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)**
  - **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 varies from \$240-290 depending on your pharmacy.

If you do not qualify for drug coverage, you can visit [www.gofreddie.com](http://www.gofreddie.com) for free or low-cost PrEP.

## How effective is PrEP in preventing HIV infections?

PrEP is highly effective, reducing the risk of acquiring HIV by up to 99% when taken consistently and correctly as prescribed. Daily use is the most well studied regimen of 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.

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.

## How often will I need to follow up with my healthcare provider?

You will need to make an appointment with your healthcare provider or attend the STI clinic one month after starting PrEP. Afterwards, you will need to make an appointment with your healthcare provider or attend the STI clinic every three months for monitoring and bloodwork.

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

### References:

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Revised May 2023

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