

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)



What is Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)?

Pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV infection (PrEP) – is the use of antiretroviral medication to prevent acquisition of HIV before exposure. Oral PrEP is a pill (drug) that is taken by a person who does not have HIV to prevent him/her from getting infected if exposed to HIV.

Please call these toll-free numbers for more information on where to find PrEP in Uganda:

- Naguru Teenage Information and Health Centre – 0800311222
- Ask without shame – 0800203063
- Baylor Uganda – 0800205555/0800244255
- SALT helpline – 0800100330

Where can someone get more general information about PrEP?

- Naguru Teenage Information and Health Centre-www.ntihc.or.ug/
email info@ntihc.or.ug
- PrEP guidelines for Uganda- <https://health.go.ug/publications/guidelines>
- Ministry of Health–AID Control Program: <https://health.go.ug/aids-control-program>
- PrEPwatch at www.prepwatch.org or AVAC at www.avac.org
- World Health Organization (2016) consolidated guidelines for the use of ARVs for treatment and prevention of HIV infection: <https://www.who.int/hiv/pub/arv/2016>
- WHO (2017) tool for Pre- Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) of HIV infection- <https://www.who.int/hiv/pub/arv/2017?>
- Preventive Care Uganda: www.preventivecareinternational.com

Is PrEP the same as PEP?

No. PrEP is taken before possible exposure to HIV while PEP(Post Exposure Prophylaxis) is taken after possible exposure to HIV. PEP is taken as an emergency precaution within 72 hours (3 days) after exposure for up to 28 days and then stopped. PrEP is taken daily for as long as someone is at risk of HIV infection.

PrEP clinical trials and demonstration projects conducted in Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and many other countries have confirmed that if someone takes a PrEP pill daily it can prevent HIV acquisition. These study results have resulted in the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation that people at high risk for HIV use PrEP. Ministry of Health in Uganda has also recommended and is supporting some health care centers to offer PrEP.



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Is PrEP safe?

Truvada, the drug that is approved for use as PrEP, has an excellent safety profile. In fact, for many years it has also been one of the drugs used for treating people living with HIV. After its approval by WHO, many people in different countries are using PrEP to prevent HIV infection. It can be used by males and females including adolescent girls and young women. Over 12,000 people have been initiated on PrEP in Uganda, globally over 350,000 people are using PrEP to prevent themselves from HIV infection.



Who should take PrEP?

PrEP is for those individuals who are HIV negative and are at substantial/ high risk of acquiring HIV. An individual should consider taking PrEP if one:

- Has sex with partners whose HIV status is unknown and does not use condoms.
- Has a partner who has HIV and is not on treatment OR has a detectable viral load.
- Has multiple sexual partners.
- Engages in transactional sex with multiple partners.
- Knows or is concerned that his/her partner has other sexual partners.
- Engages in practices that may increase risk of HIV acquisition e.g. use of drugs or alcohol, etc.
- Uses PEP recurrently (more than once a year).
- Gets recurrent episodes of sexually transmitted infections.
- Is in a community or sexual network with greater than 3 percent incidence of HIV.

When should PrEP be taken?

- Started seven days before possible exposure to HIV.
- ONLY if one is HIV negative confirmed by an HIV test.
- After guidance from a trained PrEP provider.
- When one feels or knows that s/he is at risk of acquiring HIV.

For how long should someone take PrEP?

- PrEP is not an emergency pill. One must take it consistently for a minimum of seven days before HIV exposure to achieve protection levels.
- PrEP is not a life-long medication. One only has to take it during “seasons of high risk” and stop when s/he or a health care provider helps to determine that s/he is no longer at risk.
- For the period one decides to use PrEP, s/he must take the pill every day.

Does PrEP have side effects?

Like any other drug, when one starts PrEP, s/he may experience some not so serious side effects that disappear within a few weeks as the body gets used to it. These may include:

- Stomach discomfort
- Headache
- Nausea

What else do you need to know about PrEP and HIV prevention?

- One is protected as long as s/he takes the drugs. There is no protection after one stops taking the medication.
- PrEP is not an HIV vaccine.
- PrEP does not prevent other sexually transmitted infections.
- PrEP does not prevent pregnancy.
- PrEP can be used with contraceptives.
- PrEP is not replacing other HIV prevention methods like condoms but is an alternative option for those who cannot use condoms.
- While taking PrEP one needs to routinely test for HIV (every three months) to confirm that s/he is HIV negative.
- One can still use PrEP if s/he injects drugs or takes alcohol.
- One can use PrEP, stop it and restart it after some time. It's important that one seeks guidance of a PrEP provider.
- PrEP is discrete. One does not have to tell his/her partner(s) that s/he is using PrEP if s/he doesn't want to.

What is the status of PrEP access in Uganda?

- In 2016 Ministry of Health (MOH) developed National PrEP guidelines for PrEP.
- Six sites started offering PrEP in 2017, increasing to 17 sites in 2018 and an additional 73 sites will be operational in 2019, with support from development partners.
- Over 150 healthcare providers have been trained to offer PrEP. More training and mentorships are ongoing at national, regional and facility levels.
- PrEP is available at health facilities and is free.
- PrEP is also available for free under some research institutions like MUJHU (www.mujhu.org), IDI (www.idi-makerere.com), MRC (www.mrcuganda.org), MUWRP (www.muwrp.org), Baylor Uganda (www.baylor-uganda.org) etc.
- MOH is in a process of developing a PrEP communication strategy.

What is the status of PrEP access globally?

- Over 65 countries have adopted PrEP for HIV prevention
- Over 350,000 people are using PrEP globally with a global target of 3 million people who stand to benefit from its use.
- Different formulations of administering PrEP are being studied, for example injectable PrEP.

Where can someone get PrEP?

- One can get PrEP from accredited healthcare facilities like MARPI in Mulago Hospital, Ice Breaker Uganda, IDI-Kasangati, Rubaare Health Centre IV, Mukono Health Centre IV and other health care facilities in Fort Portal, Ntungamo, Gulu, Mbale, Busenyi, Kabale, Rakai, Isingiro, Dokolo, Ibanda, Sheema, Kayunga, Kanungu, Kiruhura, Buikwe, Kisoro and Rukungiri.