

# HIV PrEP for people in serodiscordant relationships

**PrEP can support  
your sexual health  
and help to protect  
you from HIV**

## What is a serodiscordant relationship?

If you are HIV negative and your sexual partner is living with HIV, you might want to consider PrEP **in certain circumstances**.

If your partner has been diagnosed with HIV, has been taking HIV medication (ARVs) for at least six months, and their viral load is undetectable, there is no risk of HIV transmission through sex. An undetectable viral load means that the level of HIV in their body is too low to be measured by a blood test and will not be transmitted through sex. In this case, you do not need PrEP.

If your partner is newly diagnosed with HIV and has only just started treatment, you may want to consider PrEP until their viral load becomes undetectable.

## What is HIV PrEP?

HIV PrEP is a medicine that can stop you getting HIV through sex.

PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis.

‘Pre-exposure’ means it is taken before sex and ‘prophylaxis’ means to prevent disease—in this case by stopping you getting HIV. If taken correctly, it is highly effective at stopping HIV being passed on.

HIV PrEP tablets contain two drugs called Tenofovir and Emtricitabine in a single tablet. These drugs have been used in HIV care for many years.

**If you take HIV PrEP correctly, it is highly effective at stopping you getting HIV.**

## What is involved in taking HIV PrEP?

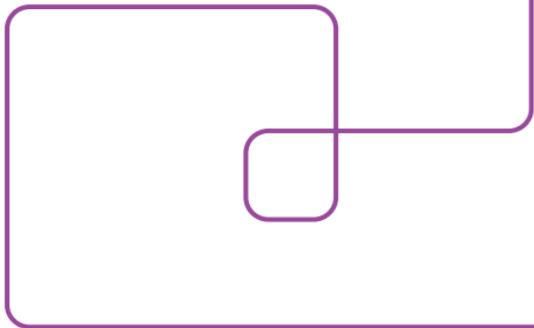
HIV PrEP involves taking pills and getting regular tests for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

**Speak with your doctor or nurse about the best way for you to take PrEP.**

There are two ways that HIV PrEP can be taken:

- **Daily dosing**, where you regularly take one pill each day.
- If you only have anal sex, you can also use **event-based dosing**, where you take pills shortly before and after you have sex.

Event-based dosing only works if you know when you'll be having sex. If you're more likely to have unplanned sex, daily dosing provides the best protection.



You may experience some minor side effects when starting HIV PrEP but these usually go away in the first few weeks.

**Most people who take HIV PrEP do not get any side effects.**

## How does it work?

Once the drug reaches protective levels, it prevents HIV from staying in your body.

If you have vaginal or frontal sex you must use daily HIV PrEP to make sure PrEP levels are high enough to provide protection from HIV. PrEP needs to be taken for **at least seven days before it is effective**, especially for women and trans people.

## What about condoms and lubricant?

HIV PrEP only prevents HIV. Condoms prevent most other STIs and/or pregnancy.

**PrEP does not protect you from other STIs and does not stop you getting pregnant.**

You should always feel in control of the sex you have and the method you choose to look after your sexual health. PrEP is effective in preventing HIV transmission, especially if it is difficult to always use condoms. You should never feel pressured into not using condoms if that is your preference.

## Where can I get HIV PrEP?

HIV PrEP is available for free from the NHS at your local sexual health service. For details of your local sexual health clinic visit the services directory at [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot). You can also purchase PrEP online at [www.iwantprepnnow.co.uk](http://www.iwantprepnnow.co.uk)

## Is HIV PrEP for me?

If your partner is newly diagnosed with HIV and has only just started treatment, you may want to consider PrEP until their viral load becomes undetectable.

If you have sex without a condom with more than one sexual partner and do not know their status, HIV PrEP can give you an opportunity to control your sexual health and can reduce your chance of becoming infected with HIV.

To be eligible for HIV PrEP from the NHS in Scotland, you must:

- be assessed as high risk for HIV transmission by a clinician in a sexual health clinic
- be 16 years or over

- ... have had a confirmed negative HIV test in a sexual health clinic
- ... be able to attend for regular, three-month reviews
- ... be a resident in Scotland
- ... be willing to stop taking HIV PrEP when you are no longer eligible.

## You should consider HIV PrEP if:

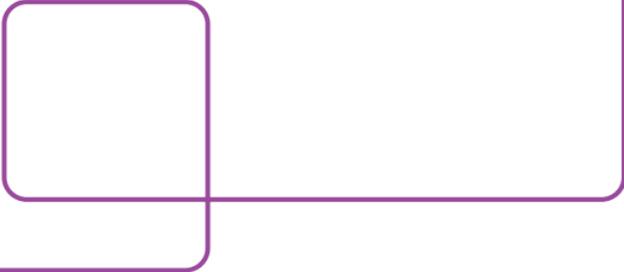
- ... you do not know the HIV status of your sexual partner(s) and you are not using condoms
- ... your sexual partner has been diagnosed with HIV but their HIV is not yet undetectable (undetectable means the level of HIV is too low to be measured by a blood test).

However, you will not be eligible for HIV PrEP in Scotland if:

- ... your sexual partner is living with HIV and their viral load is undetectable. Anyone living with HIV with an undetectable viral load does not pose any risk of transmission to sexual partners
- ... you are a visitor and not ordinarily resident in Scotland. You can buy HIV PrEP online at [www.iwantprepnw.co.uk](http://www.iwantprepnw.co.uk)

**Someone who has an undetectable HIV viral load cannot transmit HIV through sex.**

If you think you have been exposed to HIV within the last 72 hours you can access NHS sexual health services or the accident and emergency services (out of hours) to request post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). PEP is effective at preventing HIV transmission following a sexual risk.



## When should I stop taking PrEP?

HIV PrEP does not need to be taken for the rest of your life. You only need to use HIV PrEP when you are at risk of HIV. If you want to stop, it is important to discuss this with your doctor or nurse. You and your partner(s) will be advised to test regularly for HIV and STIs.

**You should always discuss any decision to stop taking PrEP with the doctor or nurse.**

### Further information

For further information, go to the [www.prep.scot](http://www.prep.scot) website. You can use the service finder to locate your nearest sexual health service. They will be happy to answer any questions you have. They can also arrange an HIV PrEP appointment for you.

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**[www.prep.scot](http://www.prep.scot)**