

The Basics of PrEP for HIV Prevention

1. Medication Instructions

- Store medication at room temperature (not in refrigerator or hot car). Keep pills in bottle with desiccant except for pills kept in 7-day pill box.
- Truvada can be taken with or without food.
- Truvada can be taken when drinking alcohol or using drugs.
- Do not share your Truvada with others; PrEP is not safe for everyone.

2. One Pill Per Day

- Take 1 pill every day.
- People who take PrEP daily have higher levels of protection against HIV.
- It takes about 1-3 weeks on Truvada before there is enough medication in your body to decrease your chance of getting HIV.
- We have **no** evidence that taking more than one pill a day gives any additional protection. In fact, taking too many can be bad for your health or make you feel sick.

3. Getting into a Routine

- Many people find it helpful to take their pills at the same time as something else they regularly do each day such as eating breakfast or brushing teeth.
- Reminders (alarms or seeing the bottle somewhere you look each day) can also help.
- Pill boxes are available if you want to try one.
- When routines are disrupted (e.g., staying out overnight, going on vacation, skipping meals), consider carrying extra pills on you.

4. Sometimes Doses Are Missed

- People sometimes forget or skip doses.
- If you forget a dose, just take it when you remember. For example:
 - *If you usually take it in the AM, but realize at 10pm that you forgot, it's ok to take 1 pill then and continue with your usual schedule the next day.*

5. Potential Side Effects

- Some people experience side effects when starting Truvada for PrEP. This may involve gas, bloating, softer/more frequent stools, or nausea.
- These symptoms are usually mild and go away after the first month on PrEP.
- Strategies to deal with stomach-related symptoms:
 - take pill with food/snack
 - take pill at night before bedtime
- Contact the clinic if you have side effects (see phone number at end of handout). We can help.

6. Discussing PrEP with Others

- People sometimes find it helpful to tell friends or family that they are taking PrEP. (It can help support pill taking.)
- Think carefully about whom you might want to tell you're taking PrEP. (You want it to be someone who will be supportive.)

7. Stopping PrEP

- If you choose to stop PrEP, please call the clinic to let us know.
- It may not be safe for you to stop PrEP without first talking with your clinician.
- Please come to the clinic for HIV testing 4 weeks after stopping PrEP.

8. Restarting PrEP

- If you have stopped PrEP for more than 7 days and would like to restart, please call us and let us know so that we can help you do this safely.
- Getting an HIV test before you restart PrEP is very important. If you are already infected with HIV and take Truvada, the virus could become resistant to this medication which means that the medication will no longer work for HIV treatment.
- Report any flu-like symptoms or rashes to your health care provider or clinic staff as they could be symptoms of early HIV infection.

9. Combining PrEP with Other Prevention Strategies

- PrEP isn't 100% effective and also doesn't protect against other STIs, so it should be combined with other prevention strategies, such as condoms, lube, and regular STI testing.

10. Health Monitoring While on PrEP

- Your health should be monitored by a health care provider while taking Truvada.
- HIV testing every 3 months and creatinine testing every 3-6 months while on PrEP is recommended.

11. Questions/Concerns/Additional Resources

- Call **(650) 573-2385** during business hours if you have any questions or concerns, or if you're going to run out of pills before your next visit. If you have an emergency, call 911 or go to the emergency room.
- prepfacts.org
- myprepexperience.blogspot.com/
- projectinform.org/prep/
- cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html