



What Is PEP?

PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) is a medicine that can keep people from getting HIV. PEP is for “emergency” situations — like if you had a condom break and you don’t know if your partner has HIV.

PEP is very effective, but it only works if you take it within 3 days of coming in contact with HIV.

Is PEP right for me?

PEP may be right for you if you think you may have come in contact with HIV in the last 3 days. For example, you may have come in contact with HIV if you:

- Had sex with someone who has HIV and isn’t taking PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis)
- Had sex without a condom and don’t know if your partner has HIV
- Were sexually assaulted
- Shared needles or other injection equipment

If you think you need PEP, talk to your usual doctor, an emergency room doctor, or an urgent care doctor right away.

Keep in mind that PEP is only for emergency situations. If you’re regularly at risk of getting HIV, talk with your doctor about taking PrEP instead. PrEP is a medicine you take every day to keep you from getting HIV.

PEP and pregnancy

If you’re pregnant and think you may have come in contact with HIV in the last 3 days, talk with your doctor about PEP right away. They can help you choose a type of PEP that’s safe for you and your baby.





How do I take PEP?

PEP is a pill that you take once or twice a day for 28 days. You need to start PEP within 3 days of coming into contact with HIV — and the sooner you start, the better it works. Starting even an hour or 2 earlier can make a difference. It's also important to take every pill.

Other steps to lower your risk

While you're taking PEP, it's still a good idea to do other things to protect yourself from getting HIV — like using a condom and not sharing needles if you inject drugs.



What are the side effects of PEP?

Some people who take PEP have side effects, like feeling sick to their stomach. But side effects usually aren't serious and get better over time. **Talk with your doctor if you're taking PEP and you have side effects that bother you a lot or don't go away.**

Before you start taking PEP, it's also important to tell your doctor about any other medicines you're taking. That's because PEP can interact with other medicines, which could cause side effects or affect how well PEP works.



How do I get PEP?

You'll need to get a prescription for PEP from a doctor or another health care provider. If you can't get in touch with your usual doctor right away, go to an emergency room or urgent care to get PEP as soon as you can.

If you don't have a doctor, go to an emergency room or try contacting community health centers near you to see if you can get a prescription for PEP there.

How do I pay for PEP?

If you have health insurance, check with your insurance company to see what your plan covers. If your insurance doesn't cover PEP, ask your doctor to apply for free PEP through medication assistance programs.

If you were sexually assaulted and you need help paying for PEP, you may qualify to get paid back for the cost of PEP and your doctor visits. To learn more about getting paid back for these costs, talk with your doctor or call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at **800-656-HOPE** (800-656-4673).

To learn more about HIV, visit:
nmlm.gov/guides/HIV-AIDS-Online-Resources