



IS PREP RIGHT FOR ME?

A GUIDE FOR CIS* WOMEN

**Cis women are women who were assigned female at birth; cis women are women who are not trans.*

What is PrEP?

PrEP, or pre-exposure prophylaxis, is a pill to help keep you HIV negative. When taken as prescribed, PrEP is highly effective. PrEP works for women, men, people of transgender experience, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, youth, and people who inject drugs.

PrEP might be right for you if you:

- Worry about your chance of getting HIV
- Want to have a baby with a man living with HIV
- Have condomless sex with partners of unknown HIV status
- Recently had gonorrhea or syphilis
- Inject drugs
- Exchange sex for money, food, housing, or drugs
- Have condomless sex with a male partner who has sex with other people, has sex with men, injects drugs, or has HIV and/or other sexually transmitted infections

What do I need to know about PrEP?

PrEP works because the drugs in the pill prevent HIV from multiplying. PrEP must be taken as prescribed for it to work. Studies show that daily PrEP protects women against HIV during vaginal and anal sex. There are differences in how often PrEP could be taken if a person only has anal sex. For more information, visit [PleasePrEPMe.org](https://www.pleaseprepme.org).

PrEP is safe and generally well tolerated. Some people experience nausea when they first start taking PrEP, and this tends to go away after a few weeks. Other rare and reversible side effects include decreased bone mineral density (weaker bones) and liver or kidney problems. These issues go away when PrEP is stopped. Talk to your health care provider if you're concerned about any of these side effects. Your provider can help in the unlikely event that you experience any of them.

PrEP is safe to use with birth control. PrEP is also safe to use while trying to get pregnant and during pregnancy and breastfeeding/chestfeeding.

How do I get PrEP?

PrEP is only available by prescription from a health care provider; it is not available over the counter. Quarterly lab tests help you stay healthy while on PrEP. Any health care provider who can prescribe medication can prescribe PrEP. For tips on talking to your provider about PrEP, check out this [guide](#).

If your health care provider is unfamiliar with PrEP, they can check the federal HIV PrEP guidelines or contact the [national PrEPline](https://www.pleaseprepme.org) at 855-448-7737 for consultation and guidance. If your provider does not want to prescribe PrEP, visit [PleasePrEPMe.org](https://www.pleaseprepme.org) to find a PrEP-friendly provider near you.

How do I pay for PrEP?

Most insurance companies (public and private) cover the cost of PrEP as well as labs and office visits needed when you are on PrEP. There are a variety of medication assistance programs for those who cannot afford to pay for PrEP. Check out [this brochure](#) for more information.



What else can I do to decrease my chance of getting HIV?

There are many options to prevent HIV if you have sex with someone who has HIV, or if you don't know their HIV status.

Undetectable=untransmittable

HIV treatment keeps people living with HIV healthy and helps get the virus down to an undetectable level. "Undetectable" means that a test cannot detect the amount of virus in a blood sample from a person living with HIV. Someone who is undetectable for 6 or more continuous months while on HIV treatment does not transmit the virus during sex.

Undetectable doesn't mean that there's no HIV present in blood. It means the virus is being controlled. This concept is also known as U=U, short for "undetectable=untransmittable."

If your partner is living with HIV, you can support your partner to stay undetectable by helping them take their HIV medications and access medical care.

You and your partner may decide the options below add an extra layer of protection. Or you may decide they are unnecessary if your partner maintains an undetectable viral load.

Condoms

Using external ("male") or **internal ("female") condoms** decreases your chance of getting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Condoms also help prevent pregnancy. No other form of birth control can decrease your chance of getting of HIV.

PEP

PEP, or post-exposure prophylaxis, is a combination of medications you can take after a possible exposure to HIV. PEP is most effective the sooner it's started, and must be started within 72 hours of the exposure. PEP is taken daily for 28–30 days.

Testing and treating STIs

Having a sexually transmitted infection (STI) can increase the chance of getting or passing on HIV. Many STIs have no symptoms. It is important for you and your partner to get tested and treated for STIs.

Where can I get more information?

- [WhatsPrEP.org](https://www.whatsprep.org)
- HIVE: www.hiveonline.org/resources
- PleasePrEPMe: www.pleaseprepme.org/women
- Black AIDS Institute's resource on Black Women & PrEP: www.blackaids.org/news-and-events/black-women-prep
- CDC PrEP info page: www.cdc.gov/hiv/prep
- Project Inform: www.projectinform.org/prep
- The Well Project: www.thewellproject.org/hiv-information/prep-women

