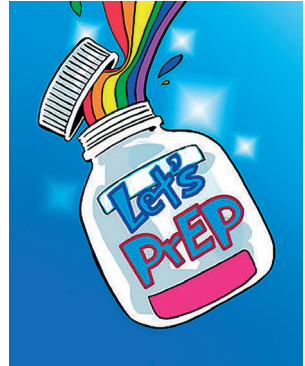


# PrEP in Scotland



PrEP

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PrEP is a combination pill that prevents HIV.

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Adapted by the PrEP Coordination Group in Scotland from the i-Base guide to PrEP. Thanks to Dr Dan Clutterbuck, Dr Laura Gillespie and HIV i-Base ([www.i-Base.info](http://www.i-Base.info)).

Information is to be used in discussion with your doctor.

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## Introduction

This is a booklet about a new option to reduce the risk of catching HIV from having sex.

## What is PrEP?

**PrEP stands for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis.**

**PrEP is taken by HIV negative people before having sex (pre exposure), to prevent infection (prophylaxis).**

PrEP contains two drugs: tenofovir disoproxil and emtricitabine (TDX\*/FTC). These are widely used medicines to treat HIV and have been used for over ten years. Both drugs are combined in a single tablet.

PrEP is one of several ways to reduce sexual transmission of HIV. Other ways include condoms and changes in sexual behaviour.

In 2015, two studies (PROUD in the UK, and IPERGAY in France) reported 86% reduction of acquiring HIV in gay men and trans women using PrEP.

In April 2017, The Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) approved tenofovir disoproxil/emtricitabine to be used as PrEP. This means that PrEP can now be provided free on the NHS in Scotland.

PrEP is approved in Europe and the US and is increasingly used in many other countries.

*\* TDX refers to the use of different tenofovir disoproxil salts depending on the manufacturer; your body processes all formulations to become the same active version of tenofovir.*

## Who should take PrEP?

*If you are HIV negative and do not always use condoms for anal or vaginal sex, then you are at risk of HIV. If PrEP is right for you, it could reduce your risk of becoming HIV positive.*

In Scotland, ALL the following criteria are used to decide if PrEP might be right for you:

- You are aged 16 or over.
- You test HIV negative in a clinic.
- You can attend for regular reviews every three months.
- You are willing to stop taking PrEP if you become no longer eligible in the future.
- You live in Scotland.

You also need to fulfil **ONE** or more of the following criteria:

- Your sexual partner is HIV positive and has a detectable viral load.
- You are either a man who has sex with men\*, or a transgender woman and have either:
  1. Had a rectal sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the last year; or
  2. Had anal sex without condoms with more than one person last year – and you are likely to do this again in the next three months.

\* This includes transgender men who have sex with men.

*Please talk to your doctor or nurse if you are not sure if PrEP is available for you.*

## Should anyone NOT take PrEP?

**PrEP should not be used by people who are HIV positive.**

PrEP is also not needed if your only partner is HIV positive and on treatment with an undetectable viral load.

An undetectable viral load means that an HIV positive person is not infectious.

## Getting PrEP from NHS Scotland

**If you are eligible for PrEP on the NHS, please contact your local sexual health clinic.**

Please see the PrEP.scot website for your nearest service.

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

## What if I am buying PrEP online?

**If you are buying generic PrEP online, you should tell your local sexual health clinic.**

This is so you can have free monitoring tests that are needed with PrEP.

## Side effects and drug interactions

### Does PrEP have side effects?

**Most people taking PrEP will not experience any major side effects.**

Less than 10% of people report mild nausea, mild bowel disturbance, bloating and headache. These side effects usually stop within the first month.

Occasionally, PrEP can cause more serious side effects that reduce kidney function. This is why monitoring blood tests are used before and during treatment.

### Does PrEP interact with other medications?

**PrEP does not interact with most drugs.**

Your clinic will check if it is okay to use PrEP with any other medications you are taking. This is why your clinic will ask for your consent to write to your GP about your PrEP prescription. You should also let a pharmacist, sexual health clinic, or GP know if you start or buy a new medication, or if you would like further advice about interactions.

*However, PrEP can interact with some painkillers that are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). These include diclofenac, ibuprofen and naproxen.*

Taking PrEP with these NSAIDs can sometimes cause kidney problems. Avoid using these medicines if you are taking PrEP, or let your doctor know if you need to use them.

## Testing and monitoring

### Before you start PrEP

**Before starting PrEP, you need a few tests at the clinic.**

**Blood tests.** These tests will check for HIV, hepatitis B and C, and syphilis as well as your kidney function.

**Urine test.** This checks your kidney function and tests for chlamydia and gonorrhoea.

### Once you are taking PrEP

Once you have started PrEP, regular monitoring is essential. Although side effects are rare, the clinic monitoring will catch any potential problems early.

#### After one month

You will usually be offered an appointment soon after starting PrEP to make sure you are okay with the medication.

#### Every three months

You will need to attend every three months for a blood test for HIV and other STIs and a urine test to check kidney function.

#### Every twelve months

In addition to your three monthly tests, every twelve months we will also do a blood test to check your kidney function. Some people will have a blood test for kidney function more regularly than this, especially if you are taking some other medications, or if you have high blood pressure.

## How do I take PrEP?

PrEP is most effective, when taken both before and after sex. This is because the body takes a while to absorb drugs, and because HIV infection also takes time.

**PrEP is therefore most effective when taken both BEFORE sex and for several days AFTER.** This is because the body takes a while to absorb drugs, and because HIV infection also takes time to become established in the body.

There are two different ways you can take PrEP, depending on your circumstances and how often you have sex:

1. **Daily dosing** (continuous PrEP).
2. **On-demand dosing** (around the time of sex).

The clinic will talk about which option is best for you. This will depend on what type of sex you are having, and how often.

### Vaginal Sex

For vaginal sex you need to take PrEP **every day**. This is because PrEP does not get into the vaginal tissues as well as it gets into rectal tissues. Daily dosing keeps drug levels higher for better protection.

You also need to take PrEP daily for a week before reaching drug levels that give the highest protection.

**On-demand dosing is NOT suitable if you are a woman having vaginal sex.**



There is limited evidence on PrEP requirements for trans women who only have vaginal sex; daily dosing is therefore considered safer.

There is also a lack of data currently about PrEP for trans men taking testosterone and having receptive vaginal sex.

Long-term testosterone use causes changes in the vaginal tissue; we do not know whether this affects HIV risk or efficacy of PrEP. Daily dosing is therefore considered safer.

For men whose only risk is insertive sex (vaginal or anal), on-demand dosing is likely to be okay, just that there is more data for daily PrEP.

Please talk to your doctor about the best dose and timing that will be most suitable for you.

### Anal Sex

For anal sex, most PrEP studies used daily dosing. In practice though taking at least four doses a week prevented HIV infections from anal sex. This is perhaps because of good drug levels in anal tissue and because the drugs stay at high levels for several days.

Several studies mainly in gay men (including IPERGAY) have been just as effective using on-demand dosing.

On-demand dosing is likely to still be as effective for anal sex.

## Different dosing schedules

### Daily PrEP (for anal or vaginal sex)

**Taking PrEP every day will make sure that there are protective drug levels in vaginal and anal tissue, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

This means you do not have to plan when to use PrEP. For people who routinely have sex at least once a week, daily PrEP is likely to be a better dosing option.

Daily PrEP also allows some flexibility. If you occasionally miss a dose, protection will still be very high. Not missing doses is more important if you are having vaginal sex.

If you are just about to start daily PrEP but want early protection in the next few days, start with a double dose.

**If you have hepatitis B, you must use daily PrEP.**

### On-demand dosing (only for anal sex)

**On-demand dosing is a way of only using PrEP when you are likely to have sex. It is sometimes called ‘event-based dosing’ or EBD.**

On-demand dosing is an option for people who do not want to take daily PrEP - but is only an option for anal sex.

This option is important if you don't have sex without condoms very often. Also if you usually know in advance when you might have sex. For example, if this will be at the weekend.

**On-demand is NOT an option if you have hepatitis B.**

Taking PrEP before and after a risk is still very effective. But the “before-sex” dose is especially important. This is to make sure there are good drug levels before you have sex.

On-demand dosing involves:

- Taking a double dose of PrEP (two pills) before sex.
- Ideally this is the day before sex (ie about 24 hours). PrEP can still be effective if taken between 2 and 24 hours before sex (although levels of one of the drugs will be less)
- Taking a single pill 24 hours later.
- Taking another single pill a further 24 hours later.

**Take a single pill each day for two days after the double dose.** This is a total of four pills from having sex one time.

Lubrication for anal sex protects against skin damage and so reduces the risk of HIV and other STIs.

The next pages have examples of taking on-demand dosing.

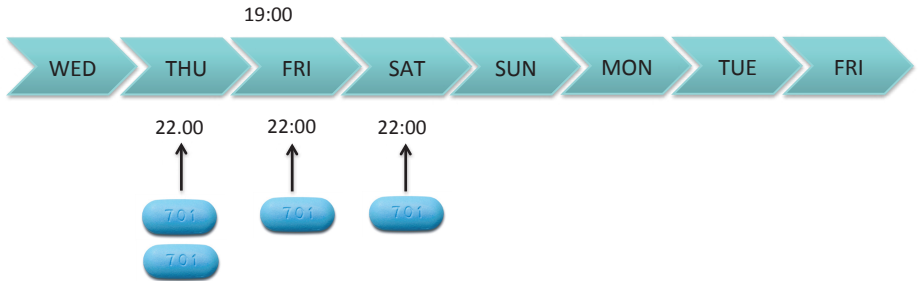
On-demand dosing if you have sex once in a week

**BEFORE SEX**

2 PrEP tablets at least 2 hours & ideally 24 hours before sex

**AFTER SEX**

1 PrEP 24 hours\* after the 1<sup>st</sup> 2  
1 PrEP 48 hours\* after the 1<sup>st</sup> 2  
= total of 2 tablets after sex  
\*2 hours before or after planned time is OK



## On-demand dosing if you have sex several times in a week

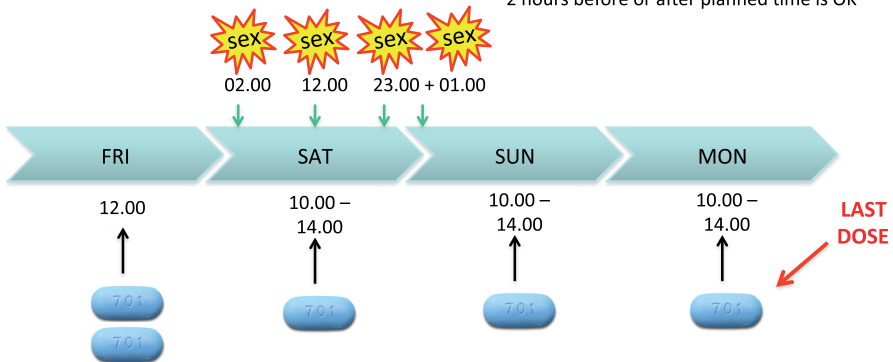
### BEFORE SEX

2 PrEP tablets at least 2 hours & not more than 24 hours before sex

### AFTER SEX

1 PrEP 24 hours\* after the 1<sup>st</sup> 2  
Take PrEP every 24 hours\* **until 2 doses after your last sex**

\*2 hours before or after planned time is OK



Take your double dose as usual 2-24 hours before sex.

If you continue to have sex in the days after starting on-demand dosing, continue to take further doses every 24 hours until you have had two doses since last sex.

If you have sex again and it is six days or less since your last PrEP dose, you can take one tablet 2-24 hours before sex instead of two.

## What if I miss a dose?

### Daily dosing:

**If you miss one or even two pills occasionally, you will still be okay.**

Don't stop PrEP, just carry on once you remember.

If you are missing several doses each week then talk to the clinic about support.

If you miss more than a week of pills take a double dose (two pills) if you know you are going to have a risk. Then carry on as normal with a daily pill. Never take more than one double dose when you start PrEP. Do not take more than a total of seven pills in one week, unless you had to take a double dose.

A pill box makes it easy to see whether you have taken or missed a dose. These only cost £1 or so from a pharmacy.

If you have a break from PrEP and have risks during this time, it is important to have another HIV test. If the risk is less than 72 hours ago, you may require PEP (post exposure prophylaxis). You can be assessed for PEP from your local sexual health clinic or Emergency Department.

### On-demand dosing:

Missing doses matters more if you are using on-demand dosing compared to daily dosing. If you are having sex over several days, try to take the pill at the same time every day and not to miss any doses.

Think of an easy time of day to remember taking the doses in the days after sex.

If you missed the BEFORE dose completely, still take a double dose as soon as possible AFTER sex, and continue daily, but contact your clinic. This is because using an additional HIV drug to make PrEP into PEP might be recommended, depending on the risk involved.

Have an HIV test as soon as possible if you had a break from PrEP and remained at risk.

## Changing the way you take PrEP

**If your circumstances change your risk of HIV, you can stop and restart PrEP.**

If on-demand dosing is an option for you, it is easy to switch between daily and on-demand and vice versa.

PrEP can be individualised to your needs at different times.

Use your visits to the clinic to talk through the ways of taking PrEP and how to stop or restart when you need to. Speak to your sexual health clinic if you would like to change from daily dosing to on-demand dosing, to see if it is an option for you.

### Can I stop PrEP completely?

**If you want to stop PrEP completely, it is best to discuss this with clinic staff. If you had a recent risk, how long to continue PrEP depends on your dosing.**

*With daily dosing:* continue taking PrEP for one week.

*With on-demand dosing:* continue taking PrEP for another 48 hours. This means taking two doses, one for each of the two days after your last risk.

If possible, discuss any plans to stop PrEP with partner(s) and get tested for HIV and other infections together. Make sure you both have an HIV test four weeks after the last risk.

If you have stopped PrEP and have a risk in the future, you should contact a clinic about PEP. Ideally this should be as soon as possible and no later than 72 hours after the risk.

Your clinic can also talk about no longer needing PrEP.

## Other STIs

**PrEP is very effective against HIV but it doesn't reduce the risk of other STIs.**

Condoms protect against most STIs and this is a reason to still use them.

Although most STIs are generally easy to treat, they can cause symptoms that can be serious. This is why regular sexual health checks are important when taking PrEP. It is also why using condoms is sometimes a good idea. Protecting against skin damage by using lubrication also helps.

## Further information

The following organisations have more information about PrEP.

PrEP in Scotland

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

HIV i-Base

[www.i-base.info/prep](http://www.i-base.info/prep)