

# PrEP: Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for the Prevention of HIV

## Is PrEP Safe?

Yes. Common side effects include upset stomach or loss of appetite, which are usually mild and should go away within the first month. Some people also have a mild headache. No serious side effects have been observed. You should tell your doctor if you have any of these symptoms that become severe or do not go away.



## If I Take PrEP, Can I Stop Using Condoms When I Have Sex?

No. PrEP decreases risk of HIV infection but is not 100%, and works best with condoms. PrEP does not prevent other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as syphilis, gonorrhea, or chlamydia. Therefore, you will still need testing for HIV and other STIs every 3 months while on PrEP.

## Will my Health Insurance Pay for PrEP?

Yes. Most health insurance will pay for PrEP, but there may be a co-pay depending on your coverage. Medicare and Medicaid will also cover the costs of PrEP. If you are uninsured, you can get help to see if you qualify for a drug assistance program and future insurance coverage.

## Did You Know That...

Worldwide, about 2.7 million people are infected with HIV each year.

In the United States 50,000 people will become infected this year.

HIV infects young, healthy people who are sexually active.

HIV often has no symptoms at all for the first 5 to 10 years of infection.



Public Health

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[dconc.gov/publichealth](http://dconc.gov/publichealth)



One pill, once a day, everyday,  
to decrease the risk of getting HIV.



Ask if PrEP is Right for You.



Public Health

# One Pill, Once a Day, Can Decrease Your Risk of HIV

## What is PrEP?

PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. Prophylaxis (pro-fil-ak-sis) means to prevent or control spread of an infection or disease. PrEP is used to prevent HIV infection from taking hold if you are exposed to the virus. This is done by taking a pill that contains two HIV medications every day. These are some of the same medicines used in people who are already infected.



## Should I Consider Taking PrEP?

Doctors prescribe PrEP for some patients who have very high risk of exposure to HIV by not using a condom when they have sex with someone who has HIV infection. Think about PrEP if you are a man or woman who sometimes has sex without a condom, especially if you have a sex partner who has HIV infection.

Consider PrEP if you don't know whether your partner has HIV infection but your partner is at risk (for example, your partner injects drugs or is having sex with other people in addition to you).

If your partner has HIV infection, PrEP may be an option to help keep you from getting HIV infection while you try to get pregnant, during pregnancy, or while breastfeeding.

## How Can I Start PrEP?

In order to begin taking PrEP, you will need to see a medical provider and have some tests done. The Durham County Department of Public Health (DCoDPH) provides FREE testing for HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and viral hepatitis which is required before starting PrEP. You will first need to schedule an appointment with the DCoDPH Adult Health clinic by calling (919) 560-8819.

During your appointment, you will meet with a DCoDPH counselor who will explain the PrEP process to you and answer your questions. You will be given a choice of local doctors who can prescribe PrEP for you. After your appointment at DCoDPH, you will need to make an appointment with the PrEP doctor that you selected. Your PrEP doctor may want to run more tests to ensure that PrEP is safe for you. It is important that you get tested for HIV and other STIs every 3 months while on PrEP. DCoDPH can provide you with FREE HIV and STI testing every 3 months.

## How Well Does PrEP Work?

In several studies of PrEP, the risk of getting HIV infection was much lower —up to 92% lower — for those who took the medicines consistently than for those who didn't. PrEP needs to be taken EVERY day without missing doses in order to work. While taking the medication, it works to block pathways that HIV uses to set up an infection. If you stop taking it or miss doses, you are not protected.

