

Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) following exposure to HIV - Patient information

- PEP is used to try to prevent a person from becoming HIV positive after they have been in contact with the HIV virus e.g. through sex without a condom
- PEP involves taking anti-HIV drugs for 28 days (4 weeks)
- PEP can cause side effects but these are usually mild
- PEP must be started as soon as possible and definitely within 72 hours
- The decision if you will be offered PEP is taken by a nurse/doctor. It is not suitable for everyone
- PEP may not work and it is not an alternative to safe sex
- PreP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) are tablets you take before & after sex to prevent yourself getting HIV in the future. This is different to PEP. PreP is now available on the NHS (& through Leeds Sexual Health). Please speak to the clinician if you think you need PreP.

What is PEP?

PEP involves taking 3 antiretroviral (anti-HIV) drugs for 4 weeks after possible exposure to HIV in order to reduce the risk of getting HIV. This may be because you have had sex without a condom, shared needles/works or occupational exposure when a healthcare worker may have a needle stick or other type of injury.

Most people in the UK living with HIV take anti-HIV medication and have an undetectable viral load. This means they will not pass on the virus through sex. Undetectable = untransmittable.

Does it work and how?

It takes 48-72hrs for HIV infection to get into the blood after entering the body. Taking PEP early, HIV infection may be prevented. For this reason, PEP works best the **earlier** it is given following exposure to HIV and is unlikely to work more than 72hrs after exposure. Even if taken within 72 hours **there is no guarantee that PEP will work, so it cannot be used instead of condoms.**

Anyone taking PEP should avoid having unprotected sex, getting pregnant or donating blood until they have had a negative HIV test at 6.5 weeks after completing PEP.

How is PEP taken?

The drugs used are the same as those used to treat HIV in people already infected. You will have been given one of the following options:

1. **Tenofovir/Emtricitabine(combined) (blue/green) - One tablet daily** (take at the same time every day with or after food.) This is actually two drugs combined together in one tablet.
AND
Raltegravir 1200mg (Yellow) - Two tablets of 600mg taken at the same time (take with/without food). Taken at the same time with the **Tenofovir/Emtricitabine(combined) (blue/green) ie. all 3 tablets taken together.**

OR

2. **Tenofovir/Emtricitabine(combined) (blue/green) - One tablet daily** (take at the same time every day with or after food.) This is actually two drugs combined together in one tablet.
AND
Raltegravir 400mg (pink) – one tablet taken twice a day, 12 hours apart (take with/without food).

You must take the medication you have been given as directed on the packaging. Mixing up doses and times will change drug levels in your body and may mean PEP is not effective. Please ask if you are not sure.

Are there any dangers involved in taking PEP?

- PEP can cause some side effects including feeling sick, vomiting and headaches. These are usually mild and do not normally require any treatment. If these symptoms are causing you a problem, contact Leeds Sexual Health on the numbers below.
- PEP may occasionally cause changes in liver/kidney function. For this reason, blood tests are taken to look for any abnormalities. Any changes tend to resolve after stopping PEP.
- PEP may mix (interact) with other drugs & affect the way they work. Whilst taking PEP do not use any 'recreational drugs' or herbal remedies/antacids. **If you are taking any medications/drugs, please tell the clinician.**
- It is very important not to miss any tablet, as this may mean the PEP does not work. If you forget one, take it as soon as you remember, and then continue the next medications at your usual time. If you are more than 24 hours late call on the numbers below.

Will anyone who asks for PEP get it?

- PEP should only be offered if a person has been at significant risk of catching HIV. To assess this risk a clinician will need to ask questions about the type of exposure (e.g. sex) that has taken place.
- You will need to have a baseline HIV test before starting PEP. This is because PEP should not be given to someone with HIV. If this was the case, your doctor will advise you on the next steps.
- **PEP is not recommended if it has been more than 72 hours since the risk.**

How many times can a person take PEP?

PEP can be taken more than once but PEP is not an alternative to safer sex. If you have concerns about this please discuss with Leeds Sexual Health at your follow up visit.

Are people immune to catching HIV whilst taking PEP?

There is now evidence supporting the use of Tenofovir/Emtricitabine to protect against HIV transmission (**pre-exposure prophylaxis or 'PrEP'**) but PrEP is only effective if taken before and after a risk. As you were not taking Tenofovir/Emtricitabine (PrEP) before your risk we strongly advise you use condoms (or do not have sex) whilst taking PEP to protect yourself and others until your final HIV status is known.

You may be eligible and want to start PreP after completing PEP. That is if you think you will be at risk of getting HIV in the future (eg. through condomless anal sex). PreP is now available through the NHS and at Leeds Sexual Health. This may have been discussed with you during your consultation. Please call us or speak to your clinician at your next appointment if you think you need PreP.

I have been given PEP - what now?

A full PEP course is 28 days. At your first appointment, you may only be given a 3 or 5 day 'starter pack' of PEP drugs. Please contact Leeds Sexual Health on the 0113 3920333, during clinic hours, to arrange a follow-up appointment at our Merrion centre clinic. Please see our current clinic information by visiting www.leedssexualhealth.com. **The starter pack alone is not enough to prevent HIV.** Leeds Sexual Health will arrange follow up HIV testing and other tests e.g. for sexually transmitted infections.

If you are given a prescription for the rest of your PEP you will only be able to collect this from the Boots pharmacy located at the LGI (**you cannot get these tablets at local pharmacies**):

Leeds General Infirmary, Great George Street, Leeds LS1 3EX - Tel: 0113 2457177

Contact details

If you experience problems whilst taking your PEP drugs you should contact Leeds Sexual Health 0113 3920334 or 0113 3920321 during clinic hours (9am-5pm Monday-Friday) or contact the GUM/ID doctor on-call by telephoning the switchboard on 0113 2432799 or 0113 2433144. Further contact details and directions to the Merrion centre clinic can be found at www.leedssexualhealth.com