

# PrEP—THE BASICS

*Want to know more about PrEP? Here are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions...*

## **What is PrEP?**

PrEP stands for “Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis”. It’s a safe and effective way for people who are HIV negative to protect themselves against HIV by taking a daily pill. Currently only one medication, called Truvada, has been studied and proven to be effective as PrEP.

## **Does it really work?**

Yes: PrEP is extremely effective. When used as directed, PrEP provides nearly complete protection from HIV. The World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control, and UNAIDS all recommend that PrEP should be available to people at substantial risk for HIV.

## **How does it work?**

Taking one dose of Truvada every day keeps enough medication in your body to protect against HIV. You can take the pill at any time that’s convenient and easy for you. It’s important to take your pill every day, but PrEP can provide protection even if you occasionally miss a dose.

## **What else is involved?**

To use PrEP safely you should have the support of a medical provider. Before starting PrEP you must have HIV, hepatitis, and kidney tests. You also need regular HIV, STI, and kidney tests for as long as you continue taking it. Seeing a medical provider regularly also gives you opportunities to ask questions and ask for support if you need it.

## **Are there side effects?**

About 10% of people experience mild side effects like upset stomach, headaches or tiredness when they start PrEP. These effects usually last only a few days or weeks. A very small number of people experience kidney problems, which clear up when they stop using PrEP. Truvada has very few interactions with other medications and can be safely used during pregnancy.

## **What about other STIs?**

PrEP protects against HIV, but it doesn’t protect against other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). That’s why regular STI testing is part of the PrEP programme: it helps ensure that STIs are diagnosed and treated quickly, limiting the risk of them being passed on.

## **Is it for me?**

PrEP is not for everyone, only you can decide if it’s the right choice for you. The WHO recommends it be an option for people “at substantial risk of HIV infection.” That may include people with HIV-positive partners, sexually active gay & bisexual men, trans people who have sex with men, sex workers, or injection drug users and their partners.

## **How do I get it?**

Doctors in Ireland can prescribe Truvada as PrEP, but a 30-day supply of Truvada costs hundreds of euros—much more than most people can pay. In some countries, including the UK, it’s possible to import generic versions of the same medication by mail for a fraction of the price. Unfortunately that isn’t allowed in Ireland. Until the price of Truvada drops or the state provides it, access to PrEP will be very limited here.

## **Why is it important?**

For 30 years condoms have been our main HIV prevention method. While condoms have been extremely successful, they have not been enough to stop HIV alone. In fact, in 2015 the number of new HIV diagnoses in Ireland was the highest ever. New options like PrEP won’t replace condoms and other risk-reduction approaches, but will be additional tools to help meet the wide range of needs in the real world.

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You can get more information about PrEP from these sources:

- [prepster.info](http://prepster.info)
- [iwantprepnw.co.uk](http://iwantprepnw.co.uk)
- [prepfacts.org](http://prepfacts.org)
- [facebook.com/groups/PrEPFacts](https://facebook.com/groups/PrEPFacts)

**ACT UP @ DUBLIN** [actupdublin.com](http://actupdublin.com)