

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Answers</i>
<p>Why do we need new HIV prevention tools, like PrEP?</p>	<p>Behavior change is very difficult, even when the stakes are high. Despite all that we know about the dangers of tobacco, millions continue to smoke. We also know that we should exercise and eat well, yet obesity is on the rise. We've got the same struggles when it comes to HIV prevention and sexual health.</p> <p>Until now, adopting safer behaviors—including condom use—has been the only option available for people who wished to protect themselves from becoming infected. Lots of people were able to successfully change their behavior in the late 1980s and early 1990s, so much so that the rate of new infections dropped by an amazing degree. Since then, however, helping people maintain safer behaviors or getting younger people to adopt them has gotten a lot harder. In fact, more than 50,000 people are estimated to have become infected each year since the mid- to late-1990s. That's about 800,000 new infections since then. Among gay and bisexual men, new cases are actually on the rise, especially for young black and Latino men.</p> <p>And it's not just individual behaviors that put people at risk for HIV. There are many external factors that contribute, too. These include poverty, homophobia, racism, homelessness—all of these things can significantly increase HIV risk while also contributing to significant health disparities across various racial and socio-economic groups.</p> <p>We desperately need new tools in order to turn things around. PrEP is a new HIV prevention strategy that puts the power of prevention in the hands of HIV-negative people. Now that PrEP has been shown to be effective in clinical trials, the next step is to determine whether and how PrEP can be used to reduce HIV infections in communities.</p>
<p>What does taking PrEP entail?</p>	<p>It's not just simply taking a pill. It's taking a pill every single day, getting regularly tested for HIV and STIs, and going into your doctor's office every 2–3 months to get your labs checked.</p>
<p>How effective is PrEP at preventing HIV?</p>	<p>If taken correctly and consistently, PrEP is 92%–99% effective in reducing your risk for HIV.</p>

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How soon does PrEP become effective after you start it? How long does it take for PrEP to become protective?	It's estimated that it takes at least seven days for PrEP to reach high levels of protection in the body. When used correctly, Truvada for PrEP provides 92%–99% reduction in HIV risk for HIV-negative individuals who take the pills every day as directed.
How often should I get tested for HIV when I start PrEP?	Before you start using PrEP, it is essential to make sure you are HIV negative; you run a small risk of developing HIV drug resistance if you are already infected with HIV when you start PrEP. That's because Truvada is not sufficient on its own for treating HIV; if you are already infected, the virus in your body could become resistant to the two drugs in the Truvada pill. HIV drug resistance means certain medications will no longer keep the virus in check if you are HIV-positive. For this reason, it is really important that before you start using PrEP, you get tested for HIV using an RNA test , which looks for the actual presence of virus in your blood. During early HIV infection, it's a more reliable test than the standard antibody test, which looks for the presence of antibodies to HIV, not the virus itself. When you are using PrEP, you are advised to get tested for HIV every three months to make sure this HIV prevention strategy is working for you.
What drugs are being used for PrEP?	Currently, Truvada is the only FDA-approved drug for PrEP. There are studies underway to explore other drug options.
Can you get HIV from Truvada for PrEP?	No, you cannot get HIV from Truvada. The medications in Truvada work to prevent HIV from establishing infection inside the body.
Once you start using PrEP, do you have to use PrEP forever?	No. You can discontinue using PrEP whenever you decide the protection it offers is no longer necessary, if you experience complications related to PrEP, or if you cannot manage to take a pill daily. However, it is advised that you continue taking PrEP for one month following your last possible exposure to HIV.
When do I stop using PrEP?	Deciding when to stop PrEP is a personal decision. If you are considering discontinuing PrEP, talk to your doctor. Are you in a new, monogamous relationship with another HIV-negative person? After three months into the relationship, consider getting tested for HIV together to ensure that you're both still negative. You may want to talk with your partner about the fact that you're thinking about stopping PrEP.

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If I stop taking Truvada for PrEP, will I be more likely to contract HIV than I was before it started?	If you stop taking Truvada for PrEP, it does not make you more vulnerable to HIV infection.
Do I need to tell my sex partners and/or friends that I'm on PrEP?	No. It is completely up to you who you tell. For some people, keeping that information private is important. Others may wish to talk about it with their partners or friends. That decision is completely yours to make.
I've heard about taking a pill for 28 days after you've been exposed to HIV ("PEP" or post-exposure prophylaxis). Are PEP and PrEP the same?	PEP, post-exposure prophylaxis, is medication taken immediately <i>after</i> exposure to HIV (within 72 hours) and continued for 28 days. PrEP, pre-exposure prophylaxis, is taken <i>before</i> exposure to HIV and continued for your "season" of HIV risk.
Will PrEP give people the excuse to not use condoms? Are people who don't use condoms irresponsible?	<p>There are many methods besides condoms that people are using to reduce their HIV risk. Some people serosort by partnering with people who have the same HIV status, reduce the number of people they have sex with, use female condoms, have sex with HIV-positive partner(s) with undetectable viral load(s), and/or use PrEP. Some methods are more effective than others depending on multiple factors.</p> <p>What's important to note is that there are a variety of options for people to protect themselves from HIV infection—also known as the prevention tool kit. Employing any or all of these methods is helpful in reducing risk and is, in fact, a way of taking responsibility for your sexual health.</p>
Aren't condoms enough?	<p>Condoms are an effective tool against HIV, but they aren't perfect. Here are just a few reasons people give for struggling to use them consistently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not having condoms handy and getting caught up in the moment. • Assuming your sex partner shares the same HIV status as you. • Doing things when drunk or high that we wouldn't do under normal circumstances. • Having reduced sexual pleasure or difficulty sustaining an erection. • Feeling that condoms block emotional intimacy with a partner. • Having a partner who refuses to wear condoms. • Having a partner who threatens to end the relationship, terminate financial or housing assistance, or even use physical violence if condoms are insisted upon.

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	<p>In fact, studies consistently show that a high percentage of people (straight, gay, or bi; female, male, or trans) do not use condoms for anal or vaginal sex with a partner whose HIV status they are unsure of.</p> <p>Some people are going to have challenges with condom use no matter what we do. Wishing that away or blaming them doesn't help, and only ensures that their risk for becoming infected remains high. PrEP could offer another way for them to protect themselves from HIV.</p>
<p>If I use PrEP, do I have to use condoms?</p>	<p>We're not here to be the condom police and dictate your sex life. To answer this question, it really depends on what <i>you and your partner</i> want and need that will determine whether you "have" to use condoms. There are many options available now to prevent HIV. Who doesn't love options? Of course, just like condoms, PrEP only works if you use it.</p> <p>If you use PrEP consistently and correctly, it is 92%–99% effective in reducing your HIV risk, whether you use a condom or not. PrEP does not protect against STIs, like gonorrhea, <i>Chlamydia</i>, or syphilis, and does not prevent pregnancy. (Condoms do protect against HIV, STIs, and pregnancy.)</p> <p>Condoms have been and continue to be an effective tool in reducing HIV risk, but we know that many people are already not using condoms each and every time they have sex. PrEP is an additional tool to consider for HIV prevention.</p>
<p>Is it okay to give HIV-negative people anti-HIV medications when we have HIV-positive people who have trouble getting HIV medications?</p>	<p>Both are equally important. It's not a yes or no question. The science and evidence are there to prove that this HIV prevention strategy works. We would be doing our communities a huge disservice if we didn't try to simultaneously prevent <i>and</i> treat HIV. Ethical questions around access, affordability, and distribution are ones we are trying to address with partners at the local, state, and federal levels. Advocates are committed to investing in ending AIDS—which prioritizes making sure all people living with HIV have access to HIV treatment and also that HIV-negative people have access to use the tools they need to prevent them from getting infected in the first place.</p>

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<p>I'm a gay and bi man and/or trans woman; does PrEP work for me?</p>	<p>Yes. Research shows that PrEP works for HIV prevention for gay and bi men and trans women. To note again, in the clinical research world, researchers use the term “men who have sex with men” (MSM) to describe gay and bi men, trans women, and others who were born male and who have sex with men but who may or may not identify as gay or bisexual. The clinical studies often lump these groups together.</p> <p>In case you're curious to know more about the research, the iPrEx study compared Truvada with a placebo pill in nearly 2,500 gay and bi men and trans women in six countries. All of the participants also got safer sex counseling and condoms, regular sexually transmitted infection (STI) check-ups and treatment, and HIV testing.</p> <p>When the researchers compared people assigned to take Truvada with those assigned to take the placebo, they found that people who were given Truvada had lower HIV infection rates compared to people who were given placebo. When the researchers took it a step further and looked only at people with detectable levels of the drugs in their blood (a sign that the medication was being taken regularly), they found that transmission dropped by as much as 92%. Further analyses indicate that drug levels corresponding to daily use are associated with 99% protection against HIV.</p>
<p>I'm a trans woman or trans man who is taking hormones; does PrEP work for me?</p>	<p>More research needs to be done to figure out if hormones interact with Truvada and change its HIV protection effectiveness, but no interactions have been reported to date.</p>

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I'm a heterosexual woman or man; does PrEP work for me?	<p>Yes, studies show that Truvada for PrEP, when used consistently, works for HIV prevention for heterosexual woman and men.</p> <p>Curious to know more about the research?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partners PrEP study looked at Truvada or Viread alone compared with a placebo in more than 4,500 heterosexual men and women in Kenya and Uganda who were in couples where one partner was HIV positive and the other was HIV negative (what scientists call “serodiscordant” couples). Focusing just on the men and women assigned to take Truvada, the researchers found a reduction in new infections of up to 75%. In those with detectable drug in their blood, it looked like PrEP cut infections by at least 90%. Again, good adherence mattered. • A similar smaller study in Botswana, called TDF2, looked at Truvada compared with a placebo in more over 1,200 heterosexual men and women found similar rates of efficacy as Partners PrEP. For participants who were assigned to take Truvada, risk of HIV infection dropped by around 62%.
I'm an injection drug user; does PrEP work for me?	<p>Yes. Research shows that Truvada for PrEP works for HIV prevention for people who inject drugs.</p> <p>In case you're curious to know more about the research, the Bangkok Tenofovir Study compared Truvada with a placebo pill in more than 2,400 participants who reported injecting drugs during the previous year in Bangkok, Thailand. Truvada was associated with a nearly 49% overall reduction in risk of HIV infection in IDU participants. Protection increased to 74% among those who took the study drug via directly observed therapy during clinic visits. Because participants in the study may have been both injecting drugs and having sex without condoms, it is still unclear whether Truvada specifically prevents “parenteral” HIV acquisition—that is, acquisition through injection rather than sex.</p>
I'm an adolescent under 18 years old; does PrEP work for me?	<p>More research needs to be done to figure out the safety and effectiveness of PrEP for people who are younger than 18 years old. There are studies underway with the Adolescent Trials Network trying to answer this question.</p>

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My partner is HIV-positive and I am HIV-negative; is PrEP right for me?	<p>PrEP may be one HIV prevention strategy for you to consider to reduce your HIV risk, and can be used with other HIV prevention methods. We're all about being proactive about your sexual health choices.</p> <p>For example, if your HIV-positive partner is already taking HIV medications to treat his/her HIV and reduce viral load to undetectable levels, it reduces his/her chance of transmitting the virus to you. If you add PrEP to the equation, then you would add another layer of protection to reduce your HIV risk. As a disclaimer, remember that PrEP does not protect you against other STIs, like gonorrhea or syphilis, or prevent pregnancy.</p> <p>It's important for you to have open communication with your partner and your doctor about whether PrEP may be a good option for you to consider.</p>
What about side effects from taking Truvada for PrEP? How will my body be affected?	<p>For the first few weeks of starting Truvada for PrEP, some people complain about nausea, vomiting, fatigue, and dizziness, with these minor symptoms eventually resolving themselves over time.</p> <p>Some people in clinical trials had elevations in blood tests that looked at kidney function. With this particular side effect, there were no physical symptoms, so it is important to remember that if you take PrEP, you need to get routinely checked by your doctor to make sure your kidneys are working properly.</p> <p>Some people in studies had a decrease in bone mineral density within the first month. However, but these changes were small, did not progress over time, and did not increase risk for fracture. Once Truvada was stopped, the bone mineral density returned to normal.</p>
What are the long-term effects of taking Truvada for PrEP?	<p>HIV-positive individuals have been taking Truvada to assist in treating HIV for many years now. Although it is important to be monitored for any potentially negative side-effects, we know that taking Truvada is generally very safe. Negative side effects generally appear when you start taking Truvada.</p>
Are there sexual side effects of taking Truvada for PrEP?	<p>From what we know from completed studies, people have not complained about sexual side effects.</p>
If I drink alcohol and/or use recreational drugs, is it safe for me to take Truvada for PrEP?	<p>Alcohol and recreational drugs are not known to interact with Truvada for PrEP. It is safe to take PrEP after a night on the town.</p>

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What about the chance of HIV developing drug resistance to Truvada for PrEP?	Before you start using PrEP, it is very important to make sure that you are HIV-negative because you run the small risk of developing HIV drug resistance if you are already infected with HIV when starting PrEP. That’s because Truvada is not sufficient on its own for treating HIV; so if you are already infected, the virus in your body could become resistant to that drug. To develop HIV drug resistance means certain medications will no longer keep the virus in check if you are HIV-positive.
Why would someone who doesn’t have HIV decide to take a pill every day?	Taking a pill every day to prevent something from happening to your body is not a new or foreign concept. Currently, there are over 10 million women in the United States who take a pill every day to prevent pregnancy. Think of PrEP as like the birth control pill, except instead of preventing pregnancy, it reduces risk for HIV.
What if I’m not having sex right now; do I still need to take PrEP?	If you feel your risk for HIV has changed recently and it doesn’t make sense for you to take PrEP anymore, then talk to your doctor about discontinuing PrEP. If you’re just experiencing a temporary “lull” in your sex life lasting less than a month or two and expect to be sexually active again in the near future, it may not be advisable to discontinue PrEP. Ask your doctor.
Will I experience fat redistribution?	Truvada for PrEP has not been associated with any redistribution of fat in the body.
The pill is making me nauseous. What can I do?	According to studies, most people who experience nausea while taking PrEP stop feeling nauseated after about a month of taking the drug. You might also consider switching the time you normally take your drug; taking it at night might allow you to sleep through the nausea, for example.
How do I know if the pill I’m taking for PrEP is working?	If only there was some magical indicator for you to know! The best part about PrEP is that most people don’t feel any different when they’re taking it. Most people don’t experience side effects. However, rest assured that if you are taking PrEP correctly and consistently, the drug is in your body, ready to fight HIV if you come into contact with it.
I know it’s really important for me to take Truvada every single day for it to be highly effective. What can I do to remind myself to take Truvada every day?	There are a variety of tools that can help you remember. One of the easiest is the power of association . Tie your pill-taking to something you already do every day—like brushing your teeth, washing your face before bed, or eating breakfast. If you prefer a more technological approach, there are dozens (perhaps hundreds) of mobile apps that can remind you take your medication. Options vary by operating system. Just do a search for “medication reminder” in your phone’s app store. Read the reviews and feature list carefully to determine which one sounds best for you. Finally, you can always do it the old-fashioned

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	way by getting a pill box that has a compartment for each day of the week. Just make sure to refill it each week!
What happens if I accidentally miss a dose of Truvada for PrEP?	It's important to take your pill every day, but every now and then it's perfectly human to forget. If you routinely take your pill at night, for example, and remember when you wake up in the morning, it is fine to take your missed dose with breakfast. If you don't remember until the next evening, it's not necessary to take a double dose. The opposite scenario also works: If you usually take your pill in the morning but forget to do so, just take it when you remember that same day. If you don't remember until the next morning, just pick up where you left off, and do your best to remember next time.
I've already started using PrEP; what if I want to take my pill at a different time?	No problem! For example, if you decide to start taking it before bed rather than in the morning, just make the switch. On the day you make the switch, you can either take a dose in the AM, and then again in the PM to get on the new schedule, or just skip the AM dose and take it in the PM to get on the new schedule.
I'm traveling and will be in a different time zone. How can I figure out when to take my pill?	No worries! Just take the pill at the same time you would at home.
What if I have a hard time remembering to take the pill?	Until we have other options, PrEP currently works best for people who can fit daily pill-taking into their lives. You can try one of the options listed in the previous FAQ question about pill reminders. If you find that taking a pill every day just isn't working out, PrEP might not be right for you.
Does it matter what time of day I take Truvada?	No, although it is best to find a consistent time to take it daily to help you to remember.
If I'm taking Truvada every day for PrEP, can an HIV-positive sex partner with an undetectable viral load infect me?	Taking daily PrEP will reduce risk of HIV by up to 99%. And people living with HIV who are undetectable do not transmit HIV. You can find more information about why people living with HIV who are undetectable do not transmit HIV here.
My sex partner is taking HIV medications to treat his/her HIV. Will my anti-HIV medications interact with the HIV medications he/she is taking?	No, your anti-HIV medications will not interact with the HIV medications that your partner is taking. The anti-HIV medications you are taking work to prevent HIV infection from happening in your body and nobody else's, and vice versa. Also on a similar note, sharing medications with each other is a big no-no. Not only does sharing mean your partner could run out of meds unexpectedly (and be at risk for

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	developing drug resistance), the medications your partner takes may not be the same ones used in safe and effective PrEP.
I talked to my doctor about PrEP and they won't prescribe it to me because they don't know what it is. What can I do?	<p>Unfortunately, a lot of general practitioners and even some HIV specialists still don't know about PrEP. You don't have to talk to an HIV specialist to get PrEP. You can talk to any general health provider who is qualified to write a prescription, including doctors, nurse practitioner, physician assistants.</p> <p>If your doctor simply doesn't know what it is and is uncomfortable prescribing it, ask them for a referral to someone who might be better able to meet your needs. Some doctors are also resistant to prescribing PrEP. If they say they don't know anyone to refer you to, ask whether it might be possible to be referred to an HIV specialist.</p> <p>If they still can't help you, there are a few things you can try.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your city has a local LGBT center, they might have a list of LGBT-friendly providers that might be more knowledgeable about PrEP. • There may also be an AIDS service organization nearby that might be able to refer you to a provider who can help. • If your provider is not knowledgeable about PrEP but would like to learn more, they can consult with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for guidance on prescribing PrEP and/or also contact the National HIV/AIDS Clinicians' Consultation Center's Warmline for expert clinical advice (<i>for clinical providers only</i>). • My PrEP Experience has a wonderful resource monitoring insurance and Medicaid coverage of Truvada for PrEP. If you have trouble getting a prescription for Truvada as PrEP, or getting a PrEP prescription covered by insurance or Medicaid, please send an email to myprepexperience@gmail.com.