

A USER'S GUIDE TO PEP

Introducing PEP

- PEP is emergency medication that can prevent HIV infection if started as soon as possible, **within 36 hours but not beyond 72 hours, after potential exposure** to HIV.
- PEP stops HIV exposure from becoming an HIV infection.
- To prevent HIV, take PEP as prescribed for **28 days**.

Five Steps to PEP

1. Take PEP as prescribed, every day for 28 days

- Ask your health care provider or pharmacist how to take your pills. There are different drug combinations for PEP. You may need to take some pills once a day and some pills twice a day.
- To help you remember:
 - Keep your pill bottles where you can see them.
 - Take PEP before or after a daily activity, like eating breakfast or brushing your teeth.
 - Set daily reminders to take PEP on your phone or watch. To receive texts that remind you to take your medication, text **CARE** to **877877**, then text **MEDS** to the same number.

PEP starter packs

You may be given a “starter pack” of pills for the first few days of PEP. You may have to fill a prescription for the rest of the 28 days. To avoid any interruption to PEP, **fill your prescription as soon as possible** and let the prescribing clinic know if you have trouble getting your pills for any reason.

Not sure about staying on PEP?

- **Do not** stop taking PEP without talking to your health care provider.
- If you cannot afford to pay for PEP, tell your provider. They may be able to help you get financial assistance.

Take PEP every day—record your PEP use.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15	Day 16	Day 17	Day 18	Day 19	Day 20
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Day 21	Day 22	Day 23	Day 24	Day 25	Day 26	Day 27	Day 28		
X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		

2. If you forget to take a pill, take it as soon as you remember

- But **do not** take two doses at the same time to catch up.
- If you keep missing doses, ask your health care provider about ways to stay on track.

Keep your PEP with you

Always carry a daily dose of your PEP in a small pill box or wrapped in tinfoil. This way, if you miss your routine, you will still have PEP and can keep on schedule.

3. Check in with your health care provider

- As a part of taking PEP, your provider will schedule follow-up visits—or check in with you by phone, text or email—to:
 - See whether you are taking PEP as prescribed
 - Ask if you are experiencing any side effects
 - Answer any questions you have about PEP, HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- You will be tested three times for HIV: when you start PEP, right after you finish it and two months after you finish PEP.
- Tell your provider right away if you experience fevers, swollen glands or a rash—these may be signs of an early HIV infection or another STI. Special testing is needed to diagnose HIV at this stage. Early diagnosis and treatment may have added health benefits for you and can help you avoid passing HIV to others.

You can schedule follow-up visits with your regular doctor or nurse, or at other clinics that have experience providing PEP. See the back cover to learn how to find a clinic that can help with PEP.

4. Know the side effects

- PEP can cause mild side effects, including nausea, upset stomach, fatigue and headaches.
- These symptoms often get better or go away after the first week of taking PEP.
 - To prevent nausea, take PEP with a snack or before bed to make nausea less noticeable.
 - To relieve nausea, try ginger candy or peppermint tea.
 - For gas or bloating, try an over-the-counter gas reliever.
 - If soft stools bother you, try a fiber supplement.
- Speak to your health care provider if side effects continue to bother you.

5. After PEP, consider PrEP

- **Emergency PEP** protects you **after** an exposure to HIV. PEP can be repeated if you are exposed again. **PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)** is a better option if you are HIV-negative and may be exposed to HIV again.
- **PrEP** is a daily pill that greatly reduces your risk of HIV as long as you take it every day.
- If you are worried about HIV, ask your doctor if PrEP may be right for you.
- Ask your doctor or nurse if PrEP may be right for you.

More ways to prevent HIV

- **Use condoms as often as possible**, ideally every time you have sex and even if you are taking PEP or PrEP. PrEP and PEP **do not** protect against other STIs or pregnancy, but condoms do.
- **Use silicone or water-based lube**, especially during anal sex.
- **Get tested.** It's the only way to know if you or a partner has HIV.
- **Support partners living with HIV.** Encourage them to get HIV care and to take their HIV medications every day so they stay healthy and avoid passing HIV to you or others.

Five steps to PEP

1. Take PEP as prescribed, every day for 28 days. Use the calendar in this guide to help you make sure you take PEP every day.
2. If you forget to take a pill, take it as soon as you remember. But **do not** take two doses at the same time.
3. Check in with your health care provider.
4. Tell your provider if side effects are bothering you.
5. After PEP, consider taking PrEP and using condoms as often as possible to play sure and stay sure.

Questions about PEP?

For more information, visit [nyc.gov](https://www.nyc.gov) and search **HIV PEP**.

Call **311** to find a clinic with experience providing PEP near you.