

## This booklet is about a new way of preventing HIV called PrEP.

THE BOOKLET IS FOR PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS WOMEN. EVEN IF PREP ISN'T SOMETHING FOR YOU, IT'S IMPORTANT THAT ALL OF US KNOW ABOUT IT.

[PREPSTER.INFO/PREP4WOMEN](https://prepster.info/prep4women)

This booklet was produced as part of **MOBPRESH** (Mobilising for PrEP and sexual health) – a women's led project from **PREPSTER** – and was developed in partnership with **IWANTPREPNOW**.

To find out more about MobPrESH visit:  
[PREPSTER.INFO/MOBPRESH](https://prepster.info/mobpresh)

ILLUSTRATIONS BY Lynne Zakhour  
DESIGN BY Richard Kahwagi  
October 2020

PrEPster is a project of The Love Tank CIC, 159 Mile End Road, London E1 4AQ, UK. Registered company 11275460.  
[thelovetank.info](https://thelovetank.info)

Prepster

the love tank

I want PrEP now

terrence HIGGINS TRUST

PrEP as part of sexual and reproductive health for women

# Sisters are doin' it for themselves

PREPSTER AND THE LOVE TANK WITH IWANTPREPNOW AND TERRENCE HIGGINS TRUST

## What is PrEP?

PrEP stands for **PRE EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS**. PrEP is a course of tablets taken by someone who **DOESN'T** have HIV. When PrEP is taken as prescribed, it's almost **100% EFFECTIVE** at stopping HIV.

PrEP needs to be taken **BEFORE AND AFTER** sex for it to work. Most people who use PrEP take it every day on an on-going basis. Some people can also take PrEP around a specific sexual event (often called event-based dosing).

Some people take PrEP for **SHORT BLOCKS OF TIME** when they might be at increased risk of HIV – such as going on holiday.



## How does PrEP work?

If a person taking PrEP is exposed to HIV, PrEP **PREVENTS HIV** from replicating in their body. This stops HIV from establishing itself and stops the person taking PrEP from developing HIV.

## Who might benefit from PrEP?

PrEP has most commonly been used by gay and bisexual men - but it's not only for them. PrEP works, and can be used by **EVERYONE, INCLUDING WOMEN**.

Some women decide to use PrEP because it gives them **MORE CONTROL** over their sexual health. For example, using PrEP means you don't have to rely on a partner to have or to use a condom for HIV prevention.

Many women decide to use PrEP because it gives them **GREATER PLEASURE** during sex, or allows them to enjoy types of sex that they might otherwise not have.

PrEP might be useful in circumstances when a woman feels they do not have control over their sex. This might be if a partner refuses to use condoms, or if a partner is being coercive.

Some women who do sex work decide to use PrEP, especially if condoms aren't or can't always be used with clients.

## Who might benefit from PrEP? (CONT.)

PrEP might be useful if **TRAVELLING** to a part of the world where HIV is more common and sex is likely to happen. Or, if a partner has recently travelled to a part of the world where HIV is more common, and had sex there, then PrEP might be an option for you.

Some women decide to use PrEP if they have sexual partners from a part of the world where HIV is more common.

In addition, PrEP might be an option if a woman has sexual partners who have had increased HIV risk. For example, their partner might be a man having sex with other men, or has injected drugs.

## How to use PrEP

**DAILY PREP** (one pill per day) will be the best option for most women. PrEP only needs to be taken during times when sex is happening. If you are going through long periods when sex isn't happening, then it's not necessary to take PrEP.

To start PrEP, take **ONE PILL EVERY DAY** for seven days before having sex. Keep taking one pill every day while you're having sex. If you decide to stop taking PrEP, keep taking one pill every day after the last time you had sex, and until you have seven sex-free days.

**BEFORE STARTING PREP**, it's important to know for sure that you don't already have HIV. It's recommended to have an HIV test, a kidney function test, and a full STI screen before starting PrEP. Find out more from the web links below.

## Access to PrEP

In the UK PrEP is **AVAILABLE THROUGH THE NHS**. You can visit your local sexual health clinic for more advice or check out **PREPSTER** and **IWANTPREPNOW** for more information. It's also possible to buy PrEP online. To find out how to do so legally and safely visit the websites listed below:

→ [PREPSTER.INFO](https://prepster.info)  
→ [IWANTPREPNOW.CO.UK](https://iwantprenow.co.uk)

## More info and support

PrEP is safe to use with hormonal birth control, while trying to conceive, and while pregnant. PrEP can also be used safely while breastfeeding.

It is safe to use PrEP when taking gender-affirming hormones. It is also safe to use PrEP if you are using HRT for menopause.

PrEP **DOES NOT PREVENT PREGNANCY** and **DOES NOT PROTECT AGAINST OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS** (STIs). You might want to consider other tools such as condoms to help prevent pregnancy or reduce your chances of STIs. PrEP is safe to use with alcohol, other substances and most prescription medications.

## Deciding to use PrEP

If you think PrEP is an option for you, then the decision to take PrEP should be **YOURS**, based on all the information available. Sexual partners, friends, family members, or health professional might all have opinions about your sexual health and what they consider to be the 'right' choice. Take time to decide if PrEP is for you, and the pros and cons of taking it. Talking to a health advisor before making a decision might be helpful.

## The future of PrEP

As research develops, new options for PrEP are being introduced. A vaginal ring that prevents HIV has been approved for use in some parts of the world. Trials are currently underway for injectable PrEP, too. Many of these formulations are being developed for use for both HIV prevention and contraception.

## Sharing information about PrEP

Not all of us will need to or want to take PrEP. But it's important that we all **KNOW** about PrEP, and how it can be part of our sexual health options. One of the most effective ways of sharing information about PrEP is by talking to each other about it. **EVEN IF PREP ISN'T FOR YOU**, it could be that your friends, family, lovers or colleagues could benefit from it. Share this information!

HAVING ACCESS TO PREP EMPOWERS ME TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF MY BODY. IT ALLOWS ME TO MAKE CRITICAL DECISIONS ABOUT MY HEALTH, SAFETY, EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC STABILITY. PREP HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CREATE EQUITY FOR WOMEN GLOBALLY.

— LINDSEY

PREP FOR ME IS ABOUT SELF CARE AND HARM REDUCTION. EVERY MORNING, WHEN I SWALLOW MY PREP, IT REMINDS ME THAT MY BODY IS WORTHY OF PROTECTION.

— KUCHENGA

# Sisters are doin' it for themselves

PrEP as part of  
sexual and reproductive  
health for women

PREPSTER AND THE LOVE TANK  
WITH IWANTPREPNOW AND TERENCE HIGGINS TRUST