

Know about

# HIV PrEP

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis

UK EDITION

English language



# There is now an additional HIV prevention option available

**PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. PrEP is used by people who don't have HIV to stop them getting it. Even though PrEP has been available on the NHS in some parts of the UK since 2017, many of us still don't know about it. PrEP is becoming increasingly available and used around the world. Not everyone can or will want to use PrEP. But it's important we all know about it – including people with HIV.**

# PrEP

is more  
than a pill

**Most people who use PrEP take it as a pill (called oral PrEP). But there are now also other ways to take PrEP. In some parts of the world, PrEP is available as a ring inserted into the vagina. Injectable PrEP, that is taken every few months, is being used more and more – but is not yet widely available. New ways of taking PrEP – including injected implants – are also in development. All of these options offer more choice in how we prevent HIV.**





# PrEP stops the person taking it from getting HIV

**Oral PrEP is started BEFORE sex (PRE) and continued after sex. It's different from PEP (post exposure prophylaxis) – which is only taken AFTER an HIV exposure (POST). The drugs used in PrEP include some of the same ones used to treat people with HIV.**

# PrEP offers a different option to prevent HIV

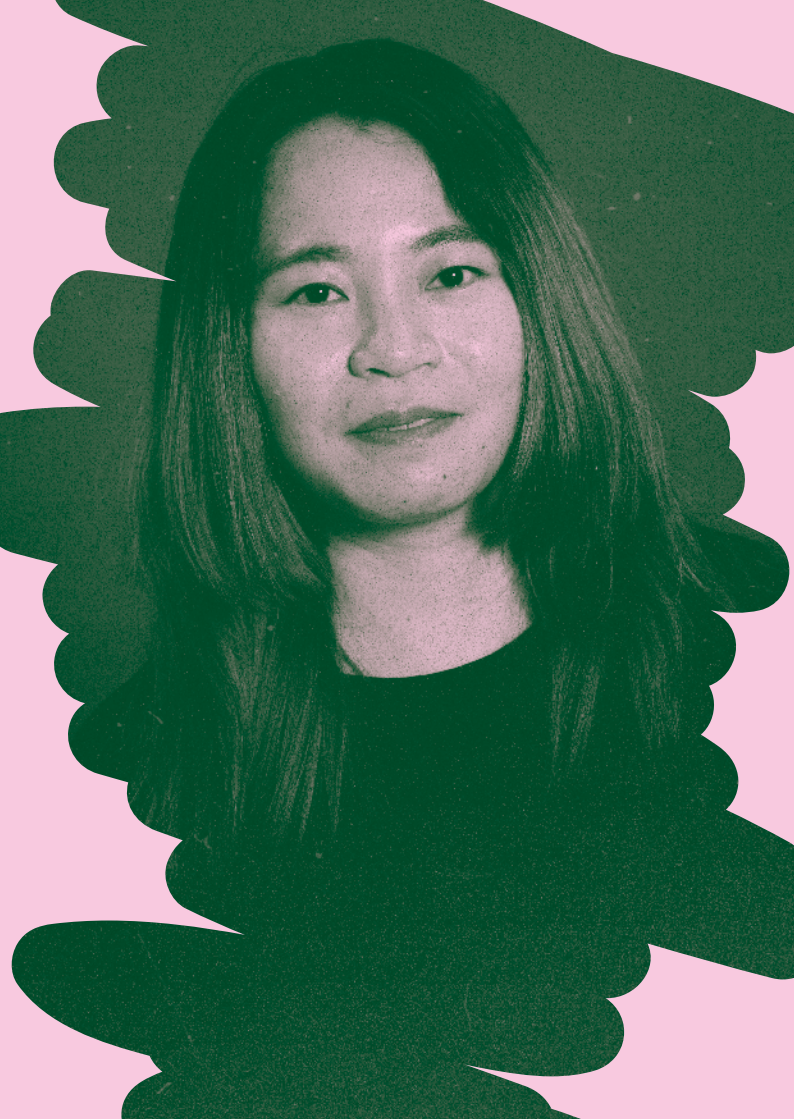
**Condoms have been very effective in preventing tens of thousands of HIV infections. But HIV rates have remained relatively high in some groups of people. In places where PrEP has been made available, and is targeted to those who will most benefit from it, there's been big falls in HIV infections.**



**PrEP** is  
extremely effective  
at preventing HIV  
when taken as  
directed, with few  
side effects

**Research shows that PrEP is very effective at preventing HIV. These studies have tested PrEP in 'real world' situations. When PrEP doesn't work, it's almost always because it isn't being taken as prescribed. Very few people who use PrEP encounter side effects – mostly headaches or feeling sick - and these usually go away after a short time.**





**PrEP** is for  
HIV negative  
people who  
are likely to be  
exposed to HIV

**PrEP can only be used by people who don't already have HIV. Not everyone will want or need to use PrEP: no-one should be pressured into starting PrEP. PrEP will be of most benefit to people who are at higher risk of being exposed to HIV.**

# Who might benefit from PrEP?



**People having sex in networks that have higher levels of HIV. In the UK this includes gay and bisexual men.**

**PrEP might be useful if travelling to a part of the world where HIV is more common and sex is likely to happen. Some people decide to use PrEP if they have sexual partners who are from parts of the world where HIV is more common.**

**PrEP can be useful for people who want to have more control over their sex lives (including some sex workers). People who don't consistently use condoms, or are having lots of sex, or who want to increase sexual pleasure during sex, might also consider using PrEP. People who inject drugs might also benefit from using PrEP.**



Most people  
who use **PrEP**  
take it as a  
daily pill  
(oral PrEP)

**PrEP** Taking **PrEP**  
involves regular  
HIV & STI tests



Some people – who know ahead of  
when they are going to have sex –  
can use oral PrEP for short periods  
of time around episodes of sex,  
rather than taking it every day.

This is called event-based PrEP or  
2-1-1 PrEP. There's currently not  
enough research to show if this way  
of taking PrEP works for everyone,  
and for all types of sex. Not all  
formulations of oral PrEP have yet  
been researched for using PrEP in  
this way.

Because PrEP can only be used by  
people who are HIV negative, it's  
important to have an HIV test before  
or soon after starting PrEP. It's  
important to have regular HIV and  
STI (sexually transmitted infection)  
tests when using PrEP, especially if  
having lots of sex. The only other  
regular test that is needed is a  
simple kidney function test.



Once the  
drug reaches  
protective levels  
it stops HIV  
from staying in  
the body

**It's important for the person using oral PrEP to have taken it in enough time BEFORE sex, and to continue AFTER sex. This ensures that the drug reaches and maintains levels that are sufficient to be protective. PrEP stops the HIV virus from replicating and reproducing inside the body. Continuing to take oral PrEP after sex maintains protective coverage in the event that some HIV remains in the body after sex.**





# PrEP <sup>only</sup> prevents HIV. Condoms can prevent some STIs

**PrEP only prevents HIV and not other STIs or pregnancy. Condoms can help prevent some other STIs. Other forms of contraception (like the pill) are still needed to prevent pregnancy. Regular STI testing help diagnose and treat STIs. Some STIs – including Hepatitis A and B, HPV (the wart virus), and MPOX (monkeypox) can be prevented by vaccination (available from sexual health clinics).**

**Some formulations of oral PrEP are available in the UK through the NHS, or by buying online**

**In England, oral PrEP is now available for free from NHS sexual health clinics. Find out more at:**

[www.prepster.info/prep-nhse](http://www.prepster.info/prep-nhse)

**In Scotland, oral PrEP is currently available for free from NHS sexual health clinics. Find out more at:**

[www.prep.scot](http://www.prep.scot)

**In Wales, oral PrEP is available through the PrEPARED project:**

[www.friskywales.org/wales-prep-project.html](http://www.friskywales.org/wales-prep-project.html)

**In Northern Ireland oral PrEP is available from some sexual health clinics:**

[www.rainbow-project.org/how-to-access-prep-in-ni](http://www.rainbow-project.org/how-to-access-prep-in-ni)

# Buying PrEP online

**Some people might not be eligible for PrEP on the NHS, or might want to buy PrEP privately. HIV prevention activists have worked to ensure that oral PrEP bought online is genuine. It is legal to buy PrEP online as long as it is for personal use (up to 3 months' supply at once). Visit [www.prepster.info](http://www.prepster.info) and [www.iwantprenow.co.uk](http://www.iwantprenow.co.uk) for more information on buying PrEP.**

**Different tools work for different people at different times. Choose what works best for you**

**Many people enjoy and like using condoms – they remain an important HIV prevention option. A person living with HIV who is on HIV treatment and has an undetectable viral load cannot pass HIV on to sexual partners, even if condoms aren't used. For more information**

**see** ([www.prepster.info/tasp](http://www.prepster.info/tasp))

**Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) can also be used AFTER sex (within 72 hours) and is available from most sexual health clinics or accident and emergency centres in some hospitals.**

**Is PrEP right for me?**



**It's important that everyone who might benefit from PrEP gets to know about it. One of the best ways of educating ourselves or others about PrEP is by talking to our friends, lovers and sexual partners about it.**



# **This booklet was produced by *PrEPster* – a programme of *The Love Tank CIC*.**

**The booklet is adapted from an  
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*PrEPster*, *HIV Scotland*, and  
*Developing HIV Literacy* and  
*Dr Ingrid Young (University  
of Edinburgh)*.**

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@dev\_HIVliteracy

**Find out more  
about PrEP:**

[www.prepster.info](http://www.prepster.info)

