

HIV Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

What is HIV Post Exposure Prophylaxis?

PEP is a course of HIV medication that is taken within 72 hours after possible exposure to HIV infection. PEP involves taking a 2 or 3 drug combination of HIV medication for four weeks. Taking PEP may help reduce the risk of getting HIV if you have been exposed to the virus.

Who should take PEP?

Australian national guidelines recommend that anyone who meets specific criteria regarding possible contact with HIV should take PEP. High risk contact may include sex without a condom, sharing injecting equipment, needlestick injury or other blood exposure. It is important to discuss the need for PEP with a healthcare provider trained in using HIV medication, or with clinical staff at a hospital Emergency Department. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding discuss this with your healthcare provider before starting PEP.

When should I take PEP?

It is recommended that PEP be started as soon as possible after you have been exposed. PEP can only be prescribed up to 72 hours after you have been exposed. This gives the medications and your immune system the best chance to work against HIV.

Where can I get PEP?

In the ACT:

Business hours

Canberra Sexual Health Centre, Building 5, Level 1 Canberra Hospital ph 6244 2184

After hours

Canberra Hospital Emergency Department, Yamba Drive, Woden
Calvary Hospital Emergency Department, Haydon Drive, Bruce

Canberra Afterhours Locum Medical Service (CALMS): 1300 422 567
(Consulting fees will apply for CALMS)

Outside of the ACT:

<http://getpep.info/get-pep-now/>

How do I take PEP?

The tablets need to be taken at the same time each day and may need to be taken with food. It is important not to miss any doses of PEP.

If you get PEP from an Emergency Department or Canberra Afterhours Locum Medical Service (CALMS) you will be given a starter pack so you can commence PEP

immediately. This pack only has enough tablets for five days' supply. To continue PEP you will be referred to Canberra Sexual Health Centre for review and a script for further tablets which are dispensed by Canberra Hospital Pharmacy. If you want to continue PEP you must attend Canberra Sexual Health Centre before you run out of medications. There is a co-payment for the remaining medication supply which you are expected to pay when you receive the medications from the pharmacy. As PEP is a specialist medication you are unable to access initial or further supply from your GP.

Does PEP have side effects?

Yes. PEP drugs can cause side effects such as nausea, diarrhoea, headaches, tiredness and a rash. More serious side effects have been reported although these are rare. You should discuss the possible side effects and how to manage them with your healthcare provider.

What else do I need to know while taking PEP?

- Taking PEP will not make you immune to HIV.
- PEP is not guaranteed to stop you from being infected with HIV and it is not a replacement for using condoms and safe injecting practices.
- You should use effective birth control to avoid pregnancy whilst on PEP.
- If you miss a tablet, take the dose as soon as you remember and seek advice by calling Canberra Sexual Health Centre and asking how you should continue to take your tablets
- You need to protect others during the 3 month window period by:
 - using condoms and not sharing injecting equipment
 - not donating blood, sperm, organs or tissue.

Useful websites

<https://endinghiv.org.au/nsw/stay-safe/pep/>

For general support regarding HIV and sexuality issues <http://aidsaction.org.au/>

Accessibility

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

For further accessibility information, visit: www.health.act.gov.au/accessibility

www.health.act.gov.au | Phone: 132281

© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra September 2017

References

Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (2013) Post Exposure Prophylaxis after Non-Occupational and Occupational Exposure to HIV National Guidelines. Accessed <http://www.ashm.org.au>