

# All about PrEP:

## Common Questions & Answers

### What is PrEP?

HIV Pre exposure prophylaxis (PrEP for short) is a medication that can be taken to prevent HIV transmission. It is intended to be taken by people who are HIV negative before being exposed to HIV. When taken consistently every day, PrEP can prevent the transmission of HIV by up to 99%. This medication is also called Truvada.

PrEP is not the same as nPEP (post-exposure prophylaxis, a medication taken to prevent HIV after an unplanned exposure). For more info about nPEP, talk to a health care provider or visit <https://smartsexresource.com/topics/post-exposure-prophylaxis-peg>

### How does PrEP work?

When taken consistently, the medication builds up in blood and tissues and protects exposed areas (ie the rectum, vagina or cervix) from HIV.

### Who can access PrEP?

PrEP is free for BC residents with active MSP (BC medical coverage) who meet the BC Center for Excellence criteria for being at an increased risk of acquiring HIV.

Increased risk is defined as reporting condomless anal sex **and** having any of the following:

**a.** a previous infectious syphilis or a rectal bacterial sexually transmitted infection (STI), especially if you were diagnosed in the last 12 months

**b.** Use of nPEP (a medication taken after a possible HIV exposure) more than once.

**c.** Ongoing sexual relationship with an HIV-positive partner who is not taking HIV meds (ART) and/or does not have an HIV viral load <200 copies/ mL.

**d.** (HIRI-MSM) score of 10 or higher (this is a screening tool that identifies risk of HIV transmission)

*\*\*If you don't meet the above criteria but want to access PrEP, we still encourage you to come speak to an RN or doctor about alternative access routes.\*\**

### What else do I need to know about PrEP?

- PrEP needs to be taken **consistently for at least 7 days** before you are protected from HIV. It's best to use condoms, at least for the first week.
- **Missed doses:** if you miss more than 3 days in a week, you are not protected. Protect yourself by using condoms or abstaining until you've been back on your meds for at least 1 full week. If you've had a high risk exposure come to the clinic to talk to a provider about whether you need nPEP

- PrEP will **not** protect you from **other STIs** like gonorrhea, chlamydia or syphilis. We always recommend using barriers (condom, oral dam, glove) to reduce risk.
- **Side effects** are rare. Some people experience nausea, diarrhea and bloating; these symptoms usually stop after the first few weeks
- **Risks:** Truvada can lead to kidney damage (this is rare). Before starting PrEP, the doctor will check your kidney function with blood and urine tests. These tests need to be repeated every 3 months.
- PrEP may also reduce **bone density** (slight thinning of the bones); this is

reversed when PrEP is stopped. This is not considered a serious concern in healthy individuals, but may be important if you already have bone problems.

- **Stopping PrEP:** if you decide to stop PrEP, it is important that you talk about how to best do so with your doctor. If you've been using it regularly you can usually stop if it has been more than 48 hours after your last sexual exposure. Make sure you get follow up HIV testing 4-6 weeks after stopping.
- If you have questions, call us to book an appointment at 250-592-3479

# What's the Process of Getting PrEP at Island Sexual Health?

You can access PrEP through Island Sexual Health by booking an appointment at **(250) 592-3479**.

It is also a good idea to contact Lifelabs and book an appointment for yourself to get your required lab work done following the 1st appointment. Please call us any time with questions at 250-592-3479.

## STEP 1

### Appt #1 (Approx 1 hour long)

You will see the nurse to review your medical and sexual health history, for routine STI screening and to discuss your eligibility for PrEP. After that you'll see a doctor and get a requisition for blood and urine testing.

\*\*You will need to do your blood tests at a lab as soon as possible. \*\*

## STEP 2

### RESULTS

If all of your results are negative (normal), your medication should arrive within 10-14 days following your appointment. If anything comes back abnormal, clinic staff will notify you and ask you to return to the clinic.

## STEP 4

### Repeat lab tests

*4 weeks after starting PrEP*

You will need to take your req to the lab for your follow up test **4 weeks** after starting PrEP.

## STEP 3

### 6 week supply PrEP pickup

A clinic nurse will contact you, either by text or email (your preference) to let you know when your meds have arrived. You can drop in to pick them up at our clinic during clinic hours. You'll also get a form (requisition) to repeat your blood tests. When you pick up your meds, you can book your appointment for getting your PrEP renewal in about 5 weeks.

## STEP 5

### Appt #2 (Approx 15 minutes)

*5 weeks after starting PrEP*

You'll see the doctor for 15 minutes to review the results of your lab tests. If all results are normal, the doctor will complete your PrEP renewal form for 3 months of PrEP. Please let the doctor know when you'll be out of medication. Your meds should arrive at our clinic within approx. 5-7 days.

## STEP 6

### 3 month supply PrEP pickup

A clinic nurse will contact you, either by text or email (your preference) to let you know when your meds have arrived. You can drop in to pick them up at our clinic during clinic hours. When you pick up your meds, we will remind you to call to book your appointment for getting your PrEP renewed in about 2 months. When you come back for your renewal, you can expect to do a routine STI screen along with bloodwork to check your kidney function.