

# **PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis):** **Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis)?** PrEP is a way for you to protect yourself from getting HIV by taking one pill a day of an anti-HIV medication called Truvada. PrEP needs to start BEFORE you are exposed to HIV and continue every day for the whole time you may be exposed to HIV.

**Why take PrEP and how well does it work?** When taken every day, PrEP can reduce your chances of getting HIV by more than 90%. PrEP works best when it is combined with condoms and other ways to protect yourself from HIV.

**Who should take PrEP?** PrEP should be considered for people who are HIV-negative and at high risk for getting HIV from sex or injecting drugs.

**How can I find out if PrEP is right for me?** If you think you may be at high risk for HIV, you should ask your primary care provider for a referral to talk to one of our PrEP providers at Kaiser Permanente. You can do this through email (secure messaging on the kp.org site or app), a phone call, or an in-person appointment. A PrEP appointment may be scheduled for you on the spot, or you may get a phone call to schedule your PrEP appointment.

**What will happen at my PrEP appointment?** Before your PrEP appointment, your primary care provider will order blood tests to make sure your liver and kidneys are ok, and they will also check for HIV, hepatitis and other STDs. Please try to do these labs at least 4 days before your PrEP visit, if possible

During your PrEP appointment, you will talk with a PrEP clinician who has lots of training and experience prescribing PrEP. Your PrEP clinician will ask you questions about your risk for HIV. These will include personal questions about what kind of sex you have. They will also include questions about drug and alcohol use. Even though these questions may be uncomfortable to answer, it is important that you do your best to answer truthfully so we can give you the best information about how to stay safe from HIV. Your PrEP clinician will talk to you about PrEP and other ways to stay safe from HIV and STDs. You will have the chance to ask any questions you want about PrEP, HIV or STDs.

**Will I start PrEP right away?** If you decide you want to take PrEP and if your PrEP clinician feels it is safe for you to use PrEP, you may be given a prescription right away. In some cases, a few other tests may be checked before starting PrEP.

**How will I know if PrEP is working and not hurting me?** Regular lab follow-up is an important part of using PrEP safely, and you will have more labs one month after starting PrEP and then every 3 months for the whole time you use PrEP. If lab tests are not normal, you may need additional testing. This is very important to keep you safe and healthy.

## **If I take PrEP, can I stop using condoms when I have sex?**

**No**, you should not stop using condoms because you are taking PrEP. If PrEP is taken daily, it offers a lot of protection against HIV infection, but not 100%. Condoms also offer a lot of protection against HIV infection if they are used correctly every time you have sex, but not 100%. PrEP medicines don't give you any protection from other infections you can get during sex (like gonorrhea, chlamydia, and hepatitis), but condoms do. You will get the most protection from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases if you take PrEP and still use condoms during sex.

**Can I stop and start taking PrEP?** PrEP must be taken every day to provide the best protection against HIV. If you stop PrEP and want to restart OR if you miss more than 7 days of medication, you should let your PrEP provider know so that we can help you restart PrEP safely.

**How long do I need to take PrEP?** There are many reasons that people stop taking PrEP here at Kaiser Permanente. For example you may want to stop taking PrEP if:

- Your risk of getting HIV becomes low because of changes in your life
- You find you don't want to take a pill every day or often forget to take your pills
- You can't or don't want to come in for regular lab tests every 3 months or when ordered by your Kaiser PrEP clinician
- Your insurance coverage changes and you can no longer get care here at Kaiser Permanente
- You have side effects from the medicine that interfere with your life, or if blood tests show that your body is reacting to PrEP

If you decide to stop PrEP, please call or email your PrEP provider to let them know.

For additional information, please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/prevention/research/prep/>