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PrEP for Women

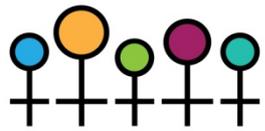
Last updated: December 23, 2020

Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic...one woman at a time.

#onewomanatatime

www.thewellproject.org

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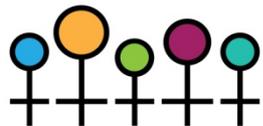
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What Is PrEP?

PrEP stands for
Pre-
Exposure
Prophylaxis:



Prophylaxis: Taking medicine **before** being exposed to something, to prevent yourself from getting a disease or condition



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What Is PrEP?

We use *several kinds of medicine* this way:

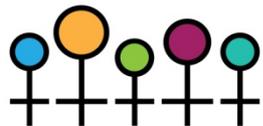
- ***Taking anti-malaria medication*** when we travel to areas where we might be bitten by mosquitoes that carry malaria
 - When medicine is in a person's body before getting a mosquito bite, (s)he is much less likely to get sick from malaria when bitten
- For women, ***taking birth control pills (contraceptives)***
 - Chances of pregnancy greatly reduced when contraceptives are already in a woman's body when exposed to semen during sex
- PrEP here: HIV-negative women ***take an HIV drug to reduce their risk of acquiring HIV*** if they are exposed to the virus



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How Does PrEP Prevent the Spread of HIV?

- CD4 cells infected with HIV become little factories that make thousands of new viruses each day
 - HIV drugs work by blocking HIV from making copies of itself
- If an HIV-negative woman already has HIV drugs in her bloodstream when she is exposed to HIV, e.g., during sex without condoms:
 - Medicine might be able to keep the HIV from making enough copies of itself to "take hold"
 - May prevent her from getting HIV



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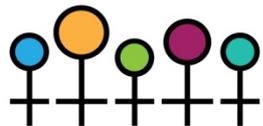
Approval for Daily Oral PrEP

July 2012: U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved daily Truvada (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate + emtricitabine, or TDF/FTC) as PrEP for sexually active adults at risk of getting HIV

- Truvada often used as part of combination HIV drug treatment
- First time FDA has approved any drugs for prevention of HIV

June 2016: World Health Organization (WHO) released updated guidelines recommending daily oral PrEP be offered as additional prevention method to all people at substantial risk of HIV

- WHO approves either Viread (tenofovir/TDF) or Truvada for daily oral PrEP
- Each country must approve PrEP separately



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Has PrEP Been Shown to Be Effective?

- **Efficacy shown**
 - Daily PrEP more than 90% effective for sexual prevention ***when taken daily as prescribed***
 - Highly effective as “bridge” for serodifferent couples until partner living with HIV has undetectable viral load
- Current trials among women focus on topical PrEP as well as oral and injectable PrEP



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Why Are Some Research Findings Unclear?

For HIV prevention tools (condoms, PrEP, etc.) to work, they ***have to be used – correctly and consistently***

- Studies that showed benefit had ***much higher rates of adherence***
- Reasons for non-adherence, especially among women, not fully understood
- ***Need for women to participate in studies*** to understand adherence issues



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Why Are the Research Findings Unclear?

- Reasons why people – especially women – had low levels of adherence to oral PrEP is not yet fully understood
- Very important to do more research looking at what issues might affect women's interest in or ability to take a drug for HIV prevention
- Also important for women to know about and take part in future research that will look at unanswered questions about PrEP

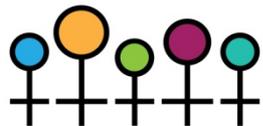


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CDC Guidelines for PrEP Use

May 2014: CDC released updated guidelines for PrEP use in U.S.

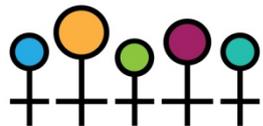
- Recommend PrEP with daily, oral Truvada be ***considered for HIV-negative people who are at substantial risk for HIV***, including people who:
 - Are in a sexual relationship with a partner living with HIV
 - Don't regularly use condoms/don't know HIV status of sexual partner(s)
 - Have high number of sexual partners
 - Are engaged in commercial sex work
 - Have had recent bacterial sexually transmitted disease
 - Use injections drugs and
 - Share drug equipment, *or*
 - Have an injecting partner who is living with HIV



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CDC Guidelines for PrEP Use

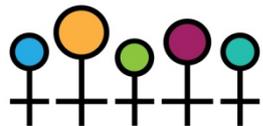
- Some reasons ***PrEP is not recommended***; having
 - Unknown HIV status (it's important that only people who test negative for HIV take PrEP)
 - Signs or symptoms of acute HIV infection
 - Decreased kidney function
 - Unknown hepatitis B status and/or vaccination status
- Guidelines suggest providers consider PrEP for people in areas or personal networks where HIV is more common, offer tools to help providers identify these areas



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CDC and WHO PrEP Guidelines

- While PrEP is designed to be used with condoms or other safer sex measures:
 - Women who cannot or do not use condoms may want to use PrEP instead of condoms
 - Important to understand overall risks and benefits of using PrEP; consider methods of protection from other STIs
- Everyone prescribed PrEP must have negative HIV test
 - CDC recommends people on PrEP be tested every 3 months to make sure they remain HIV-negative
- WHO recommends tenofovir or Truvada be offered to all people at substantial risk of HIV



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The PrEP Debate

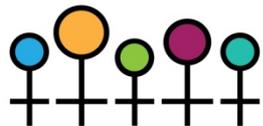
- Many believe it's a good addition to the prevention toolbox, but others disagree

Concerns about PrEP

- HIV-negative people may not adhere; PrEP won't be effective
- PrEP will be used in place of condoms or other safer sex measures

Advantages of PrEP

- PrEP can be taken without agreement or knowledge of one's sex partner
- Research has not shown that using PrEP has reduced use of condoms/other safer sex methods



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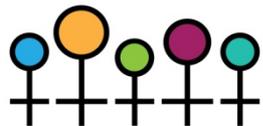
The PrEP Debate

Concerns about PrEP

- Possible side effects
 - Most common: nausea and vomiting
- Occasional serious side effects of Truvada
- Potential for developing resistance

Advantages of PrEP

- Most effects occur among people taking new HIV drug; often go away quickly
- No serious side effects found during PrEP studies
 - Small decrease in bone mineral density in men and transgender women in recent PrEP study

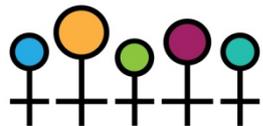


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What Does PrEP Mean for Women?

We now have evidence that PrEP works to prevent getting HIV if taken as prescribed, but ***much more work needs to be done*** before PrEP can be widely used and accepted

- ***Improving health care systems*** so people can access and afford PrEP
- Making HIV testing ***more widely available***
 - Only people who know they are HIV-negative can use PrEP safely

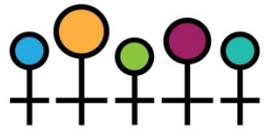


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What Does PrEP Mean for Women?

PrEP is a promising tool that women can use to ***prevent HIV without their partners' cooperation***

- Many questions remain:
 - Will men refuse condoms if they know their partner is on PrEP?
 - Will women be able to keep PrEP drugs given to them?
 - Some women worry drugs given to them might be taken away, given to another family member who "needs them more"

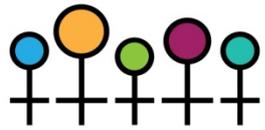


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Considering Taking PrEP?

Questions to discuss with your provider:

- How often—and for how long—do I need to take PrEP? What happens if I miss a dose/several doses?
- What are likely side effects and how will I manage them?
- How often will I need to be tested for HIV?
- How much will the drug cost me?
 - Will it be covered by my insurance?
 - Will HIV tests also be covered by my insurance?

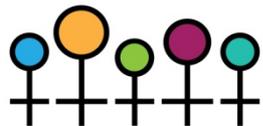


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Considering Taking PrEP?

More questions to discuss with your provider:

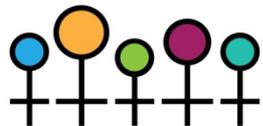
- Do any of my current medical conditions make PrEP not a good choice?
- Do any of my other prescription medications, OTC drugs, street drugs, herbs, vitamins, supplements have interactions with PrEP drugs?
- What should I do if I become pregnant while on PrEP?



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New Developments in the PrEP Arena

- Descovy
 - Contains tenofovir alafenamide (TAF); fewer bone and kidney effects than TDF
 - Approved for HIV treatment and for PrEP (PrEP study excluded non-transgender women)
- Maraviroc
 - Approved for HIV treatment; PrEP study ongoing
- Cabotegravir
 - Ongoing trials as possible long-acting injectable
- Islatravir (new type of antiretroviral)
 - Trial as possible implant for women could begin in 2021



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Learn More!

- To learn more, and for links to fact sheet featuring more details, please read the full fact sheet :
 - [PrEP for Women](#)
- For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV, visit:
 - www.thewellproject.org
 - www.facebook.com/thewellproject
 - www.twitter.com/thewellproject