

the**well**project

# PrEP for Women

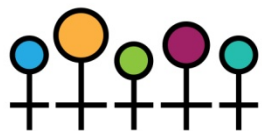
*Last updated: January 10, 2022*

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

#onewomanatatime

[www.thewellproject.org](http://www.thewellproject.org)

#thewellproject



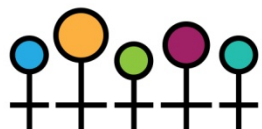
thewellproject

# 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

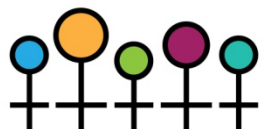


thewellproject

# What Is PrEP?

We use *several kinds of medicine* this way:

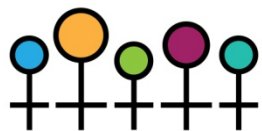
- ***Taking anti-malaria medication*** when we travel to areas where we might be bitten by mosquitoes that carry malaria
  - When medicine is in a person's body before getting a mosquito bite, (s)he is much less likely to get sick from malaria when bitten
- For women, ***taking contraceptives (birth control pills)***
  - Chances of pregnancy greatly reduced when contraceptives are already in a woman's body when exposed to semen during sex
- PrEP here: People who are not living with HIV ***take an HIV drug to reduce their risk of acquiring HIV*** if they are exposed to the virus



thewellproject

# 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



thewellproject

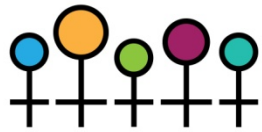
# Approval for Daily Oral PrEP

**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
- FDA has since approved Descovy (tenofovir alafenamide plus emtricitabine or TAF/FTC) for PrEP; only studied in people assigned male at birth (cisgender men; transgender women)

**June 2016:** World Health Organization (WHO) updated guidelines recommending PrEP be offered to all people at substantial HIV risk

- WHO approves Truvada for daily oral PrEP
- Each country must approve PrEP separately

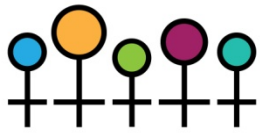


thewellproject

# Long-Acting Injectable PrEP

**December 2021:** FDA approved long-acting injectable form of the integrase inhibitor cabotegravir for PrEP

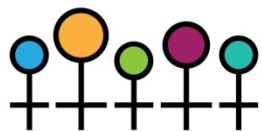
- Some people are not able to take a daily pill
- First 2 injections of Apretude (US brand name) 1 month apart; 1x every 2 months after that
- Cabotegravir can also be taken as oral medication for 4 weeks before starting injections – ensure no bad reactions to the drug
- Drug hopefully made available worldwide, especially in countries with high HIV rates; concerns about extreme high cost
- Drug stays in people's bodies long after stopping; especially true for women in studies – could have a higher chance of developing drug resistance if she acquires HIV after stopping



thewellproject

# 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



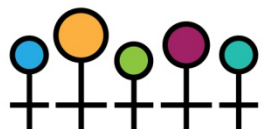
thewellproject

# 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

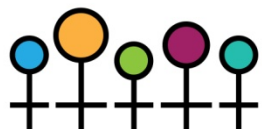




the**well**project

# 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

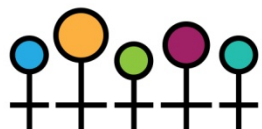


thewellproject

# CDC 2014 Guidelines for PrEP Use

**May 2014:** CDC released updated US PrEP use guidelines

- 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

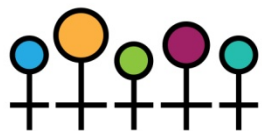


thewellproject

# CDC 2021 Guidelines for PrEP Use

**December 2021:** Updated CDC guidelines encourage providers to inform *all people who are having sex* that PrEP can protect them from acquiring HIV, offer PrEP to anyone who asks for it

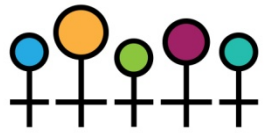
- Desired effect of reducing stigma and increasing awareness about PrEP
- Since its approval, PrEP only reached a small fraction of people in the US who might need it
  - CDC has estimated that only 7 percent of women who could benefit from PrEP were prescribed the drug



thewellproject

# When PrEP Is NOT Recommended

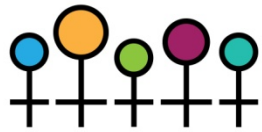
- Some reasons ***PrEP is not recommended***; having
  - Unknown HIV status (it's important that only people who test negative for HIV take PrEP)
  - Signs or symptoms of acute HIV infection
  - Decreased kidney function
  - Unknown hepatitis B status and/or vaccination status
- Guidelines suggest providers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



the**well**project

# CDC Recommendations

- 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



thewellproject

# The PrEP Debate

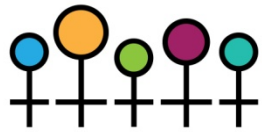
- Many believe it's a good addition to the prevention toolbox, but others disagree

## **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



thewellproject

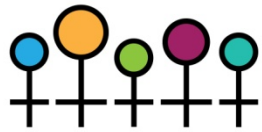
# The PrEP Debate

## 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



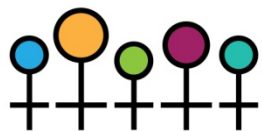
thewellproject

# 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



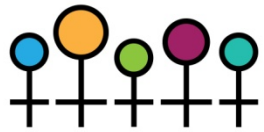


thewellproject

# What Does PrEP Mean for Women?

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

- Particularly important when intimate partner violence is a factor; woman may fear violence from partner if she asks them to use condoms
- 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"

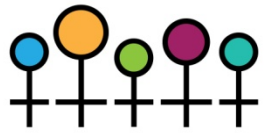


thewellproject

# 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?

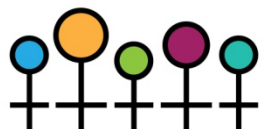


thewellproject

# Considering Taking PrEP?

## ***More questions to discuss with your provider:***

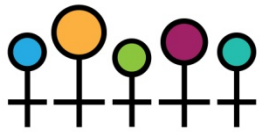
- Do any of my current medical conditions make PrEP not a good choice?
- Do any of my other prescription medications, OTC drugs, street drugs, herbs, vitamins, supplements have interactions with PrEP drugs?
- What should I do if I become pregnant while on PrEP?



thewellproject

# New Developments in the PrEP Arena

- Maraviroc
  - Approved for HIV treatment; PrEP study ongoing
- Islatravir (new type of antiretroviral)
  - Another long-acting form of PrEP under development
  - Could be used as an implant (similar to a contraceptive patch), injection, or monthly pill for HIV prevention, or a weekly pill for HIV treatment
  - Several clinical trials of the drug were put on hold in late 2021 due to safety concerns



the**well**project

## 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](http://www.thewellproject.org)
  - [www.facebook.com/thewellproject](https://www.facebook.com/thewellproject)
  - [www.twitter.com/thewellproject](https://www.twitter.com/thewellproject)