



How to take Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)

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Information for people who have decided to start or have already started PrEP

Please read this together with the Umbrella sexual health service leaflet 'Information for people thinking of taking Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)' for general information about PrEP and to decide if it is for you.

Before you start PrEP – we can help

- Tell the clinic staff you are planning to take or are taking PrEP, so they can give you the right advice, discuss how to take PrEP correctly and offer monitoring tests
- **Have an HIV test:** in addition to a finger prick test, you should have a '4th generation' or 'antigen/antibody' HIV blood test just before or on the day you start
- **Get your kidneys checked:** one of the components of Truvada can affect your kidney function. This is uncommon but it is reassuring if your kidney function is normal before you start. To check this we do a kidney function blood test and a urine test for protein in clinic. We can do these in the clinic for you. If there are any abnormal results, we can advise what to do. We may advise more frequent blood tests if you are aged over 45 years, weigh less than 55kg or have had kidney related problems before or have another medical problem
- We may only be offering the kidney function blood and urine tests at the Birmingham LGBT centre clinics. All the other tests can be done at any Umbrella clinic
- Have a full screen for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- **Check your status for hepatitis B:** this checks for current hepatitis B infection, which is important to know before you take PrEP (this must be discussed with a specialist doctor), and checks for immunity against hepatitis B. If you do not have immunity we can provide a vaccination course in clinic

To be safe

Do not start PrEP if you have a flu-like illness and until you have ruled out HIV infection. Flu symptoms can be a sign of very early HIV infection, so it is important you visit the clinic first. If you are just starting PrEP and have been at risk in the last four weeks, it is safest to have another HIV blood test four weeks after starting PrEP, to be sure you were not infected at that time.

Already started PrEP? We can help

It is important you have a blood test for HIV as soon as possible, for the reasons described above.

Every 3–4 months

- **Have an HIV test:** in addition to a finger prick test, you should have a '4th generation' or 'antigen/antibody' HIV blood test
- **Get your kidneys checked:** one of the components of Truvada can affect your kidney function. This is uncommon but we prefer to monitor your kidneys by doing a urine test for protein. We can do the blood tests at the Birmingham LGBT centre clinics
- Have a full screen for other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

Once a year

Have a blood test to check your kidney function (at the Birmingham LGBT centre clinics).

Please do:

- Talk to us about the risks you are taking and how you manage your PrEP around these risks. We can arrange extra support particularly with the use of Chems (sex under the influence of recreational drugs) or if you have other personal issues
- Tell us if your health has changed, or if you start new medications
- Still use condoms to reduce the risk of catching STIs such as syphilis and hepatitis C

How to take PrEP

PrEP can be taken as a daily tablet or 'on-demand'.

If you take your PrEP pill every day, this will provide protection for a risk at any time during the period that PrEP is taken. This dosing option may be more suitable for people who have a risk more than four times every week.

If you take your PrEP pills 'on-demand' – that is, just before and after a risk, it still works very well if you are doing this fairly regularly. This is also referred to as 'event-based dosing' or EBD. If you have not taken pills for some time it may take longer for the pills to build up in your body (up to seven days).

The 'on demand' method would not be advised for heterosexual people, Trans men who are having vaginal sex or people with hepatitis B infection.

Daily PrEP

If you decide to take your PrEP every day:

Do

- Try to take your PrEP pills at a regular time each day. Pick a time you are likely to remember; for example, you may want to link it to a routine task
- Try to avoid missing pills, but if you do miss one, or even two pills, it is still worth carrying on taking PrEP. There is still likely to be enough medication in your body to protect against HIV
- Come to the clinic if you have missed more pills and are worried about any risks taken during this period. You may be at higher risk if you have missed three or more tablets in the week before a risk
- If you miss more than a week of pills and know you are going to have a risk soon, take a double dose (two pills), and then carry on with the dosage as normal
- Come to the clinic as soon as possible if you had a break from PrEP and had any risks during this time, to discuss whether you need post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), if within 72 hours from the last risk; and to discuss the best timing for a follow-up HIV test and STI screen

On-demand PrEP

If you are taking PrEP on-demand, think about trying to make sure that there is enough of the medicine in your body at the time you have sex.

To do this:

- Take a **double-dose 2–24 hours (ideally 24 hours) before** you anticipate a risk. It's better to take a dose you don't need than miss the opportunity to start in good time. If you have not taken pills for several weeks try to start as early as possible before sex, even up to a week beforehand
- Take the next dose ideally **24 hours after the double dose** at a time you are likely to remember
- Carry on taking PrEP daily at your regular time whilst any risk continues and try not to miss any doses
- After the last risk, carry on taking PrEP every day at your regular time for **another 48 hours**, that is for at least two further doses after the last risk. Please see the graphics below for more information

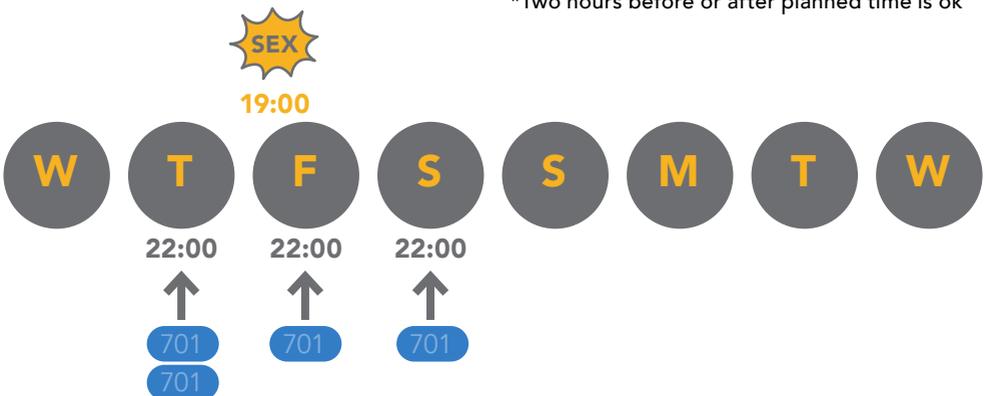
Before sex

Two PrEP tablets at least two hours and ideally 24 hours before sex

After sex

One PrEP 24 hours* after the first two
One PrEP 48 hours* after the first two
= total of two tablets after sex

*Two hours before or after planned time is ok



Don'ts

- Try not to miss taking any pills, or give up on PrEP just because you were late with the first dose. The drugs will still give you some protection so the sooner you take them the better. Start with the double dose, and continue daily. Go to a clinic as soon as you can to discuss the need for PrEP
- Don't take more than one double dose within seven days, i.e. if the next risk is less than seven days after the last dose, take just **one** tablet and continue as usual. Carrying on taking double doses after the first dose within a seven-day period isn't necessary and may do you harm. The graphics below give examples of how to take on-demand PrEP if you have sex several times, for example, over a weekend, or within a seven-day period

Examples of on-demand PrEP dosing for sex more than once within a week:

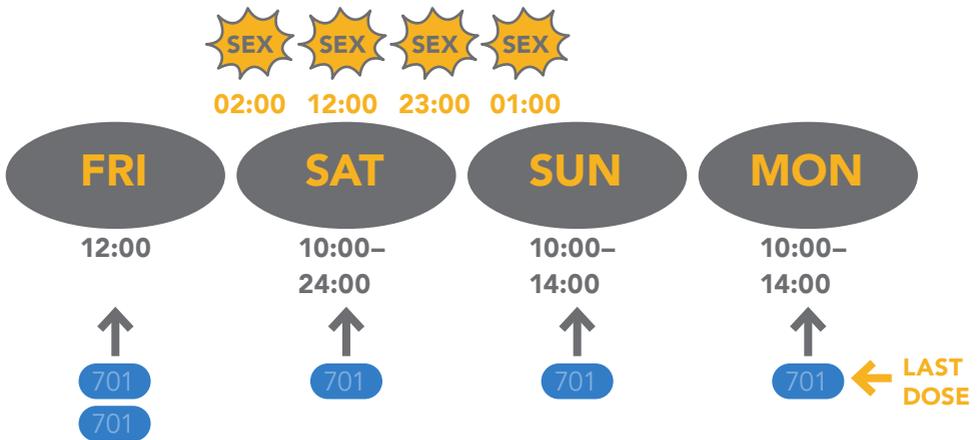
Before sex

Two PrEP tablets at least two hours and not more than 24 hours before sex

After sex

One PrEP 24 hours* after the first two
Take Truvada every 24 hours **until two doses after your last sex**

*Two hours before or after planned time is ok



First PrEP

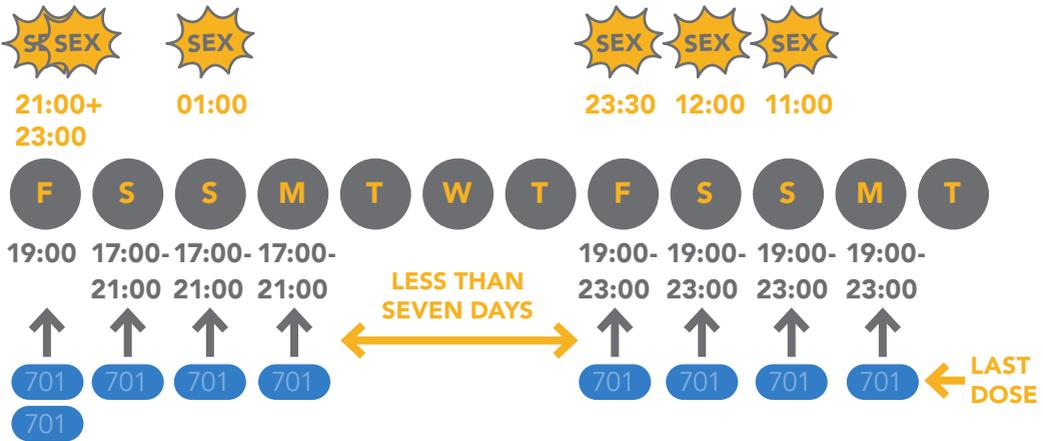
Two PrEP tablets at least two hours and ideally 24 hours before sex. One PrEP tablet every 24 hours* until two tablets taken since last sex.

*Two hours before or after planned time is ok

Second PrEP

One PrEP table at least two hours and not more than 24 hours before sex. One PrEP tablet every 24 hours* until two tablets taken since last sex.

*Two hours before or after planned time is ok



- Come to the clinic as soon as possible if you have had a break from PrEP and need advice as to how to restart. If you have had high risk sex then ideally you need to come in within 72 hours

Thinking about stopping PrEP

PrEP is an effective way of reducing your risk of HIV but you may choose to stop and restart PrEP, or change the way in which you take it, depending on your circumstances.

It is important that you continue the medication for at least two more doses after the last risk before stopping.

Talk to your clinic to get advice about which way of taking PrEP might be best for you and how to safely stop or restart when you need to.

Resources

- **i-base.info/guides/prep** – Information about PrEP written by sexual health specialists and community advocates

This information leaflet was originally developed by the Jefferis Wing at St. Mary's hospital, London but has been adapted by Umbrella sexual health services, Birmingham.

Umbrella

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