

# Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) Basics

## 1. What is PEP?

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) means taking medicine to prevent Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) after a possible exposure. If you think you were exposed to HIV within the last 72 hours or 3 days, go immediately to a clinic or emergency room and ask for PEP.

## 2. Who should consider taking PEP?

If you are HIV-negative, or don't know your HIV status, and if any of the following below apply to you within the last 72 hours, talk immediately to your doctor or go to the emergency room for PEP.

- Have you had condomless (raw) anal or vaginal sex with an HIV-positive person or person whose HIV status you don't know?
- Did the condom break during anal or vaginal sex with an HIV-positive person or person whose HIV status you don't know?
- Did you share a needle or other items/tools to prepare drugs with an HIV-positive person or person whose HIV status you don't know?
- Were you sexually assaulted?

## 3. How does PEP work?

It takes many days for HIV infection to settle in the body. PEP drugs are taken for 28 days and stop HIV from multiplying in the body's cells. If a person who has been exposed to HIV begins PEP treatment quickly (within 72 hours after the exposure), this increases the chance of successfully preventing the virus from settling itself in the body.

## 4. Are there side effects?

Side effects are not common but may include headache, nausea, vomiting, rash and loss of appetite.

## 5. How well does PEP work?

PEP is very effective in preventing HIV if taken within 72 hours after a possible exposure and by finishing the full 28 day course.

Other actions to protect against HIV include using condoms, which give you and your partners additional protection, even while on PEP. Condoms also protect against other sexually transmitted disease (STDs) and unintended pregnancy.

Visit [GetPrepLA.com/pep/get-peg-now](https://www.getprep.com/pep/get-peg-now) or call **1-844-YEA-PREP** to find where you can get PrEP immediately.

### Key Points

- PEP means taking medicine to prevent HIV after a possible exposure.
- The sooner you start PEP the better. Every hour counts. PEP needs to be started within 72 hours, or 3 days, from exposure to HIV in order to work.
- If you are prescribed PEP you will need to take the medicine for 28 days.

### For more information:

Los Angeles County  
Department of Public Health  
[GetPrepLA.com](https://www.getprep.com)

California Department of  
Public Health  
[cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/Pages/OA\\_prev\\_PrEP.aspx](https://cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DOA/Pages/OA_prev_PrEP.aspx)

Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention (CDC)  
[cdc.gov/hiv/basics/peg.html](https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/peg.html)

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