

# HIV PEP Basics

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## What is PEP?

PEP stands for Post-Exposure Prophylaxis. It is an emergency treatment to help prevent HIV infection after a possible exposure to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

## What is an HIV exposure?

A person could be exposed to HIV in the following ways:

- Sexual assault involving exchange of sexual fluids and/or blood
- Unprotected sex with an HIV-positive partner
- Injection drug use with shared injection equipment
- Occupational or medical needle-stick injuries and/or blood splashes



There may be other risks for HIV which can be discussed with a medical provider.

## Is time a critical factor in seeking PEP?

Yes! PEP medication should be taken *as soon as possible* after an HIV exposure. The medication must be started *within 72 hours* of the incident in order to be effective.

Don't Wait—  
Time is of the Essence!

## What is involved in PEP treatment?

PEP medication (in pill form) must be taken for approximately one month. Lab testing and follow-up HIV screenings may be recommended to monitor the body's response to PEP and to confirm a person's HIV status throughout the treatment.

## Who can prescribe PEP medication?

PEP can be prescribed by any qualified medical provider or through urgent care facilities or an emergency room. Lab tests and follow-up HIV screenings can be ordered by the same medical professionals. Prescribing guidelines and PEP management advice for medical providers can be found at [www.nccc.ucsf.edu/clinical-resources/pep-resources/pep-quick-guide](http://www.nccc.ucsf.edu/clinical-resources/pep-resources/pep-quick-guide). Consultations with PEP experts are available by phone 7 days a week at (888) 448-4911 (daytime hours only).

## How is PEP paid for?

Private insurance and/or AHCCCS may cover the cost of PEP treatment. For uninsured or underinsured clients, there are patient assistance programs that may help ease the cost of PEP (see [www.fairpricingcoalition.org/projects](http://www.fairpricingcoalition.org/projects) for more information). If an HIV exposure is occupational, PEP may be covered by worker's compensation insurance.

## When should PEP be used?

PEP should only be used in emergencies. It is *not* for general HIV prevention. If there is a continuous risk of potential HIV infection, medical provider assistance should be sought.



### *Routine HIV Prevention:*

Practicing safer sex (using male condoms, female condoms, dental dams, lube, etc) and avoiding sharing injection equipment are very effective ways to prevent HIV infection on an ongoing basis. In the workplace, Universal Precautions and careful sharps handling can help minimize potential occupational exposure to HIV.