

PEP AND YOU

Post Exposure Prophylaxis

TAKE WITHIN
72 HOURS
OF EXPOSURE TO HIV



PRESS HERE

Information for Gay and Bisexual Men
On Post Exposure Treatment for HIV

PEP FACTS

- PEP might stop a person getting infected with HIV
- It must be started as soon as possible after unsafe sex or a condom not working and definitely within 72 hours (3 days)
- It means taking PEP for 4 weeks
- Side effects are common and can be nasty
- It's not guaranteed to work
- PEP is not available from GPs or Pharmacies
- It is only available from some GUM/STI clinics or hospital A&E departments
- Not everyone who wants PEP will get it
- Doctors at the clinic decide who gets it using the information given to them
- Prevention of HIV by using safer sex and safer injecting methods still remains the best way, see the Play Safe Play Sexy Booklet or visit the website [www.gayhealthnetwork .ie](http://www.gayhealthnetwork.ie)

WHAT DOES PEP MEAN?

PEP stands for Post Exposure Prophylaxis or Post Exposure Prevention. It is a medical treatment course for people who have had a recent sexual exposure or a needle-stick exposure to HIV.

PEP = A Treatment To Stop A Person Becoming Infected With HIV After It's Got Into Their Body

Post

= after

Exposure

= a situation where HIV has a chance to get into someone's bloodstream

Prophylaxis

= a treatment to stop an infection happening

HOW DOES PEP WORK?

PEP works by trying to prevent the HIV virus from establishing itself in the bloodstream, and **has to be taken within 72 hours (3 days) after the exposure to HIV.**



IS PEP A CURE FOR HIV?

No: PEP is effective but is **not a cure** for HIV. At the moment there is no cure for HIV. Some treatments are highly effective at slowing down the development of HIV-related infections but that is not the same thing as a cure.

IS PEP A MORNING-AFTER PILL?

No: PEP is **not a morning-after pill** and it has considerable side effects. PEP is actually the same as the treatments offered to people who are HIV+ except it is for a shorter period (one month). People taking PEP may experience the same side effects that people taking long-term treatments can have.

WHERE DO YOU GET PEP?

In Ireland PEP is only available by prescription at sexual health (GUM or STI) clinics or HIV clinics and A&E departments. It is not available at your GP or in Pharmacies. You need to get to your **nearest clinic or to an A&E** as soon as possible if there is no clinic open.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE AN EXPOSURE?

If you are concerned that you might have been at risk it is very important to act quickly. Attend any available provider for PEP that you can access immediately if you feel you have been at risk. Don't wait for the clinic you prefer to be open. Understandably you might be upset and confused about what to do or even about the situation where the exposure took place but in this case the sooner you act the more likely it is that the PEP will be effective.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ACT QUICKLY?

For PEP to be effective it has to be taken within 72 hours (3 days) after the exposure to HIV.

The sooner it is prescribed, the greater chance it has of working. Ideally it should be taken within a few hours of exposure.

WHAT IF I CAN'T GET TO A PEP PROVIDER IN 72HRS?

If you get to a provider after the 72 hours you will not be offered PEP. You will be advised to test for HIV and then test monthly for three months.

IS IT WORTH ASKING FOR IT?

If the exposure or risk was within 72 hours then it is worth requesting that you be assessed for PEP. There are guide-lines for prescribing PEP so the doctor will ask some questions.

WHAT QUESTIONS?

The doctor will want to know the following information:

- What was the risk and how did it occur
- Is it likely to happen again
- Do you know if the person you had sex with is HIV+ or not
- Your pattern of sex risk and drugs use
- Will you stick to the treatment programme
- Are you on other medication
- When did you last have an HIV test
- Previous STI screens and hepatitis vaccinations
- Have you taken PEP before

Some doctors may want to know if you are in a stable relationship or not and may want to assess your ability to negotiate safer sex. You will be tested for HIV at the start of the programme and there will be three follow-up HIV tests to assess if the programme has been successful. You will also be tested for Hepatitis A, B, C and Syphilis.

HOW DO I GET THE CORRECT PEP?

If your sexual exposure contact is known to be HIV+, it is essential that he comes along with you to provide as much information as possible to the doctor as regards his HIV and any medications he might be taking, etc. If your contact does not want to attend, please try to have a contact telephone number so the doctor can call him. This is important to giving YOU the correct PEP.

Contact tracing is very controlled and confidential and is done with the permission of the contact. The doctor will only want to know about his HIV status and medication.

DO YOU HAVE TO PAY FOR IT?

No: you do not have to pay for it if you are prescribed it at a GUM/STI clinic or an A&E department.

CAN I USE OTHER DRUGS WHILE ON PEP?

There is a real concern that using other drugs, especially if they are not prescribed, could interfere with PEP, making it less effective. Using non-prescribed drugs could also make you less likely to remember to take your medication at the proper times (PEP medication needs to be taken at approximately the same times each day) and could put pressure on your liver, kidneys and other organs.

WHAT IS HIV RESISTANCE?

Developing resistance to HIV medications means that they are no longer working in an effective way and usually means that the particular combination will no longer be useful. As there are a limited number of combinations it is important to reduce the likelihood of resistance. Not taking the drugs in the proper way or not completing the course of treatment could make you resistant to that combination, which could have consequences if you were to need HIV medication in the future.

AM I IMMUNE TO HIV WHEN TAKING PEP?

No: You are not immune to HIV infection while taking PEP. It is vitally important that you do not put yourself at risk while on the programme. Unsafe sex while taking PEP puts you at risk of contracting HIV. Also finishing a course of PEP does not prevent you getting HIV in future. This means if you take certain risks, you can become infected just like any other HIV- person.

DO I NEED TO USE CONDOMS?

Yes: You can still have and enjoy sex while taking PEP. Condoms are a more effective and pleasant way of preventing HIV than PEP.

HOW MANY TIMES CAN YOU GET PEP?

The doctors decide who gets PEP and they're unlikely to give these expensive and powerful drugs to the same person time after time. So someone who keeps having unsafe sex will usually be offered counselling about having safer sex and won't be given PEP.

Anyway, the side effects often put people off wanting to take PEP more than once.



WHERE CAN I GO TO GET PEP?

PEP is available at the following: STI/GUM Clinics and is only available at certain hospital A&E departments.

STI/GUM Clinics	WHEN	PEP Clinic	A&E Dep.
Gay Men's Health Service 19 Haddington Road, Dublin 4 Tel: 01 669 9553	Tuesday 6.00 – 7.30pm & Wednesday 5.30 – 7.00pm	Yes	No Department
GUIDE Clinic St. James Hospital, Dublin 8 Tel: 01 416 2315	Mon and Fri 9.30am – 12.30pm Tues and Thurs 1.30 – 4.30pm	Yes	Yes
Mater Hospital North Circular Road, Dublin 7 Tel: 01 803 2063	Telephone for appointment	Yes	Yes
Beaumont Hospital (HIV Testing Clinic), Dublin 9 Tel: 01 809 3006	Thursday 10.00am – 12.30pm	Yes	Would Contact ID Team

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STI/GUM Clinics	WHEN	PEP Clinic	A&E Dep.
Limerick Regional Hospital Dooradoyle Tel: 061 482 382	Telephone for appointment	Yes	No
Victoria Hospital Old Blackrock Road, Cork Tel: 021 496 6844	Telephone for appointment	Yes	Liaise with ID Team Would contact ID team
Regional Hospital Waterford Tel: 051 842 646	Referrals to Cork STI Clinic Immediately	No	No
University Hospital Galway Tel: 091 580 580	Bleep 469 for appointment	Yes	No policy for sexual exposure
Sligo General Hospital Tel: 071 917 0473	Telephone for appointment	Yes	Yes

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STI/GUM Clinics	WHEN	PEP Clinic	A&E Dep.
Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast STI/GUM clinic Tel: 028 906 34050 (048 from Rol)	Telephone for appointment	Yes	Phone GUM consultant on call
Altnagelvin Hospital Derry Tel: 028 716 11269 (048 from Rol)	Telephone for appointment	Yes	Yes

This information is available in Chinese, French, Irish, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish and Russian at www.gayhealthnetwork.ie

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GHN can be contacted through Outhouse, 105 Capel Street, Dublin 1
Tel: +3531 8734 952 www.gayhealthnetwork.ie

Gay Health Network: GHN is an All-Ireland Network of voluntary and statutory agencies and groups involved in sexual health, HIV and AIDS work aimed at gay, bisexual men and men who have sex with men.

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72:00
HOURS

TAKE URGENT ACTION



Gay Health Network

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