

my PrEP Passport

PrEP is

safe

reliable

effective



maprep.org

Questions?

☎ Telephone, monday to friday
1-877-Portail (767-8245)

or

✉ Email, intervention@pvsq.org

All the documents and sources cited in this document are available on our website in the “PrEP and PEP” section:
pvsq.org/lignes-directrices/





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What Is PrEP?



“PrEP” is an acronym for “pre-exposure prophylaxis,” which means taking a treatment before being exposed to a pathogen to prevent infection.

“Taking PrEP” involves taking medication before having sex in order to prevent HIV transmission.

Is PrEP For Me?

Yes or No ?

1- I can't always access single-use, sterile injection materials.

2- I sometimes use drugs as part of my sex life (party & play, PnP, chemsex, etc.).

3- I sometimes have vaginal or anal sex without a condom with partners whose HIV status I don't know.

4- I sometimes have vaginal or anal sex without a condom with HIV-positive partners who aren't taking medication or who have a detectable viral load.

(continued→)

Is PrEP For Me?

5- I've had anal sex without a condom with two or more partners in the last six months.

6- I've received one or more positive diagnoses for chlamydia, gonorrhea or syphilis in the last six months.

7- I've used post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) twice or more in the past.

Results

If you answered **«YES»** to one or more of these questions, PrEP could be a good fit for you!

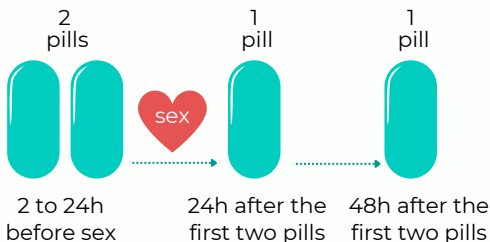
You can consult a health professional or visit the website maprep.org (in French only) to learn more about eligibility criteria for treatment, or contact us with any question at intervention@pvsq.org.

How Do I Use PrEP? (tablets)

Depending on the situation, PrEP can be prescribed “daily”, meaning one pill per day every day, or “on demand” using the “2-1-1” formula, in which you take pills before and after a possible HIV exposure.

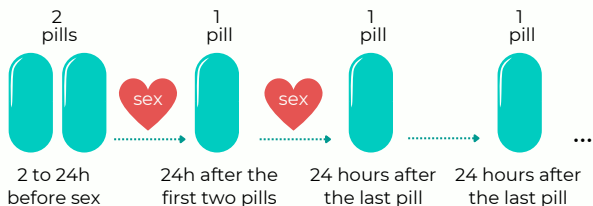
The «2-1-1» formula

- 2 pills, 2 to 24h before exposure
- 1 pill 24h after the first dose
- 1 last 24h after the second dose



How Do I Use PrEP? (tablets)

You can extend the PrEP protection period and keep having sex by adding the “1-1” part of the formula after each time you have sex. For example: two pills, sex, one pill, sex, one pill, one pill, and so on.



The basic idea is to always take at least two pills before and two pills after having sex, while respecting the wait time between each dose.

How Do I Use PrEP?

(tablets)

You can take PrEP with or without food.



Drugs and alcohol have no impact on the effectiveness of PrEP, as long as the treatment is followed as prescribed.

PrEP can be used at the same time as hormone therapy.



PrEP can be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding.



Natural health products, vitamins, homeopathic remedies and antacids can have an impact on the effectiveness of some medications and treatments. It's a good idea to share a complete list of the products you're using with your pharmacy or clinic, and to consult with them before adding a new product into your routine.

I Forgot A Dose !

At the time you notice that you forgot, if there are:

- 12 hours or more before the next dose: take the missed dose, then get back to the regular schedule.
- 12 hours or less before the next dose: wait for the following dose. Don't double up on the dose.

You need to take at least one full 2-1-1 round of on-demand PrEP or at least four days in a row of daily PrEP to effectively prevent HIV infection.

Your pharmacist can help you establish a game plan for your next steps if you notice that your missed dose means you can't appropriately complete one of these "minimum" plans.

Injectable PrEP

In May 2024, Health Canada approved the use of a long-acting injectable PrEP drug called cabotegravir. Injectable PrEP provides ongoing protection against HIV injection with one injection into the gluteal muscle once a month at first, and later, once every two months.

While cabotegravir has already been in use for several years now in Canada to treat HIV infection, at the time of this writing (January 2025), injectable PrEP is not covered by RAMQ, nor by many private insurers - negotiations are expected to conclude in the coming months. You can contact your pharmacy or visit maprep.org (in French only) to learn more about this.

Injectable PrEP

Benefits

- Ongoing protection against HIV infection
- No need to take a pill every day
- No way to forget, and no need for reminders
- Useful for people who have a hard time taking pills or don't like taking them

Drawbacks

- Not currently covered by RAMQ nor by many private insurers (as of January 2025)
- Several medical appointments required, especially at first
- Not well suited for people who don't like needles or injections, or are afraid of them
- Requires excellent adherence to the injection schedule
- No data yet about pregnancy or breastfeeding

How Do I Access PrEP ?

PrEP is available with a prescription, so you need to visit a healthcare professional for a health assessment and a prescription. Family doctors, sexual health clinics and the SIDE+ clinic can usually help you gain access to treatment or directly provide you with PrEP treatment.

You can contact PVSQ or an HIV community organization in your area if you want to learn more about PrEP and about the health resources that can give you access to it.

 **Contact us at :** intervention@pvsq.org.

How Much Does It Cost ?

Québec's prescription insurance (RAMQ) and group or private insurance programs cover most of the costs and medications used for PrEP, but not all of them. Your care provider can guide you toward the most affordable treatment for you.

Cost for 30 PrEP pills

- RAMQ: about \$100 per month
- Group or private insurance: depends on the contract; around \$60 a month on average
- Claim slip: \$0
- No insurance, no RAMQ: about \$300 for generic PrEP or \$1,000 for trademarked medications

Cost for injectable PrEP

At the time of this writing (January 2025), injectable PrEP is not covered by most insurance plans, including the RAMQ - it's estimated that the price per injection is around \$1,700 outside of insurance.

What Does PreP Health Monitoring Look Like?

If you want to use PrEP, your clinic will likely offer you an initial appointment for a full health checkup, a check-in visit 30 days later, and regular medical follow-up every three months after that.

These appointments generally involve:

- An assessment of your situation and your medical history
- Tests for HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, hepatitis C and syphilis
- An assessment of your immunity status for hepatitis A and B (vaccination may be provided to you as needed)
- An assessment of your kidney function
- A full blood panel
- A pregnancy test

These exams will help your health team to make sure the treatment is appropriate for you and that the medication won't have any harmful effects on your health.

Does It Have Undesirable Side Effects?

PrEP in pill form:

The pills used for PrEP are generally well tolerated. You may feel certain discomforts at the start of your treatment, such as nausea, headaches or fatigue, but these effects usually fade with time and eventually disappear.

Injectable PrEP:

The medication used for injectable PrEP is generally well tolerated. You may feel pain at the injection site, nausea, diarrhea, headaches or fatigue, especially at the start of your treatment. These effects usually fade with time and eventually disappear.

Very rarely, injectable treatment has been associated with allergic reactions, kidney problems and mood disorders. These effects are extremely rare and must be reported quickly to your healthcare team to prevent possible complications.

Ressources for Healthcare Professionals

In Québec, all general practitioners, some specialists and some nurse practitioner teams (often in sexual health clinics) can prescribe PrEP.





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Prescribing PrEP - Target Populations



The Ministère de la Santé du Québec (MSSS) recommends the use of PrEP for people who are likely to be exposed to HIV in the context of their sexual activity or drug use.



In general, PrEP is **not recommended** for people who don't report having anal or vaginal sex without a condom, or who don't share their drug use materials.



PrEP is not recommended for the partners of HIV-positive people who are taking treatment and have an undetectable viral load, regardless of whether they use a condom.

Treatment as prevention

We know today that HIV cannot be transmitted to the sex partners of an HIV-positive person (through oral, anal or vaginal sex) if that person takes their treatment as prescribed and maintains an undetectable viral load. This information is behind the message “undetectable = untransmittable,” or “U = U.”

Prescribing PrEP - Target Populations



PrEP **can be appropriate** for anyone who practices chemsex/PnP, regardless of whether they share drug use materials.



PrEP **can be appropriate** for anyone who doesn't always have access to individual sterile drug use materials.



PrEP **can be used** by people who are pregnant or breastfeeding when the benefits of the treatment outweigh the potential risks.



PrEP can be used along with hormone therapy.



To learn more about the recommendations, see the 'Canadian guideline on HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis and nonoccupational postexposure prophylaxis' at <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/189/47/e1448>

Treatment Modalities (tablets)

PrEP in pill form can be used in an ongoing way (“daily”) or intermittently (“on demand”).

- The ongoing (“daily”) formula **can** be used by all people and populations eligible for PrEP.
- The “on-demand” formula **can** be used by cisgender men and transgender women. Studies are underway for other populations.
- The “on-demand” formula **cannot** be used by people who have acute or chronic hepatitis B
- The on-demand formula **is not recommended** for people who may have difficulty following a complex dosing regime.

Molecules Used (tablets)

TRUVADA and DESCOVY are the brand names for three antiretroviral (ARV) medications that can be used as PrEP to prevent HIV infection. These medications act on the HIV replication cycle to prevent the virus from taking hold in the immune cells and propagating throughout the body.

ARV Resistance

The molecules prescribed as PrEP are sometimes used in combination with other ARVs in the context of tritherapy to treat HIV infection. For this reason, when they're used for prevention, it's essential to assess the person's HIV status to prevent them from developing future treatment resistance.

It's also very important to take into account the window period for the HIV test to be able to detect recent HIV infection as early as possible.

(continued→)

Molecules Used (tablets)

«TRUVADA»

emtricitabine(**F**)+ténofovir disoproxil(**TDF**)

- Also available in generic form
- Recommended for “daily” or “on-demand” usage
- Can be used by all people and populations
- Covered by RAMQ and by most private insurance plans
- If no RAMQ or insurance, for 30 pills: about \$300 for the generic and about \$900 for Truvada

«DESCOVY»

emtricitabine(**F**)+tenofovir alafenamide(**TAF**)

- No generic available
- Recommended for “daily” usage only
- Can be used by cisgender men and transgender women
- Not covered by RAMQ, but generally covered by private insurance plans
- If no RAMQ or insurance, for 30 pills: about \$1,000

Injectable Treatment

Health Canada approved the use of an injectable medication as PrEP, APRETUDE, in May 2024. At the time of this writing (January 2025), federal and provincial guidelines on the subject are not yet published. You can visit maprep.org (in French only) to get the latest news on the subject.

«APRETUDE»

cabotégravir (**CAB**)

- Use for PrEP approved by Health Canada in May 2024
- No generic available
- No guidelines published to date; the product monograph is available on the manufacturer's website
- Long-acting solution: one injection every two months in the buttock muscle
- Counter-indications are possible with some anticonvulsants and with antibiotics in the rifampicin family
- Not yet covered by most private prescription insurance, nor RAMQ (negotiations are underway)

Prescribing PrEP - Effectiveness

There is a direct and significant link between therapeutic observance and the effectiveness of PrEP in the context of sex.

Studies report adjusted effectiveness based on observance at nearly 100%. In other words, when treatment is followed appropriately, PrEP prevents nearly 100% of HIV infections transmitted through sexual activity.

“Therapeutic Observance”

‘Therapeutic observance’ refers to taking a treatment or medication as prescribed, in the prescribed dose, at the prescribed time, for the entire prescribed duration. Some texts use the terms “compliance,” “adherence” or “concordance” to refer to the same concept.

Barriers to Observance

Various elements can limit a person's ability to follow their treatment as prescribed, including:

- The experience of stigmatization
- Violent or abusive relationships
- Housing insecurity
- Financial insecurity
- Mental health comorbidities
- Drug and alcohol use

By identifying these barriers, healthcare professionals can greatly assist their patients to develop and maintain their therapeutic observance.

Barriers to Observance

Maintaining a trusting clinical relationship can help healthcare professionals to identify the barriers to observance that their patients are facing and help them to take concrete actions to overcome them. This trusting relationship can be fostered by adopting a professional stance of non-judgement based on highlighting and reinforcing successes.

Don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to learn more about practices that support strong patient counseling!

 **Contact us** : intervention@pvsq.org

Counseling - Taking PrEP

A number of strategies can help patients to maintain good treatment adherence. For example:

- Make sure the person has fully understood the treatment modalities (day, frequency, dose, injection schedule, etc.).
- For “on-demand” treatment, you can suggest that they set a reminder alarm on their phone.
- For “daily” treatment, you can suggest that they incorporate their dose into their daily routine, such as by taking it every morning with breakfast.

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Counseling - Taking PrEP

- For injectables, the clinic can offer to send a reminder the day before each injection appointment (phone, email or text).
- Encourage adherence by telling the patient about the high success rate when treatment is taken appropriately.
- Talk about the possible undesirable side effects to help the patient anticipate them.
- Set aside a moment during the appointment to talk about the person's experience in relation to their treatment. Identify challenges and celebrate successes!

Counseling - Preventing STBBIs

PrEP consultation and follow-up appointments can be great opportunities to talk about sexual health with patients and give them information and advice about HIV and STBBI prevention. For example, you can talk about:

- Modes of transmission for STBBIs
- STBBI tests and the window period
- Combined prevention: condoms, dental dams, choosing sexual practices, ...
- Treatment for partners living with HIV, and U = U
- Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)
- Communication between partners
- Contraception
- Drug use and harm reduction
- Mental health
- And more!

Notifying partners

Portail VIH/sida du Québec offers an anonymous text-based notification service for people who have received a positive diagnosis for one or more STBBIs and who need help in advising their partners. The service is free and confidential:

<https://pvsg.org/partners-notification/>

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