**PrEP talking points for the EPT team**

**What is Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)?**

* Pre = before
* Exposure = coming into contact with HIV
* Prophylaxis = treatment to prevent an infection from happening

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is an HIV prevention strategy where HIV-negative individuals take anti-HIV medications (currently, only Truvada is approved by the FDA) before coming into contact with HIV to reduce their risk of becoming infected. The medications work to prevent HIV from establishing infection inside the body.

PrEP has been shown to reduce risk of HIV infection through sex for gay and bisexual men, transgender women, and heterosexual men and women, as well as among people who inject drugs. It does not protect against other sexually transmitted infections (STI) or pregnancy. It is not a cure for HIV.

**Who is PrEP for?**

PrEP is not the right fit for everyone but may be useful for men, women, and transwomen who are at risk for HIV infection through sex and injecting drug use and okay with the idea of taking a daily pill to prevent HIV.

If you can answer yes to any of the questions below, then PrEP may be one HIV prevention strategy to consider.

* Do you use condoms sometimes or not at all?
* Do you get often get STIs in your butt?
* Do you often get STIs in your vagina?
* Have you taken post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) more than once in the past year?
* Are you in a serodiscordant relationship, where your sexual partner is HIV positive and you are HIV negative?
* Are you in an open relationship or having anal and/or vaginal sex with multiple partners?
* Are you having sex with someone whose HIV status you don’t know?
* Are you having sex with someone in a [city or region](http://aidsvu.org/map/) where the HIV prevalence is high—that is, where there are large numbers of people living with HIV?

## Effectiveness

Truvada for PrEP provides 92%-99% reduction in HIV risk for HIV-negative individuals who take the pills every day as directed. If a daily dose is missed, the level of HIV protection may decrease. **It only works if you take it**. People who use PrEP correctly and consistently have higher levels of protection against HIV.

According to data analysis from the [iPrEx study](http://stm.sciencemag.org/content/4/151/151ra125) that found PrEP to be effective:

* For people who take 7 PrEP pills per week, their estimated level of protection is 99%.
* For people who take 4 PrEP pills per week, their estimated level of protection is 96%.
* For people who take 2 PrEP pills per week, their estimated level of protection is 76%.

A few things to note:

* When starting PrEP, it takes at least seven days to reach high levels of protection against HIV.
* PrEP does not protect against other sexually transmitted infections (STI) or pregnancy. It is not a cure for HIV.

**Side Effects**

Truvada for PrEP is generally safe and well tolerated. Most people on PrEP report experiencing no side effects, but some side effects were reported in clinical trials. Participants in the iPrEx study reported side effects that fall into four main categories (ordered here as most to least common):

* **Nausea**
* **Headaches**
* **Weight loss**
* **Small increases in serum creatinine:** Truvada is known to cause small increases in serum creatinine, a naturally occurring molecule filtered by the kidneys.

For most people, these side effects went away on their own after the first few weeks of taking Truvada, or when the medication was stopped.

## Warning

It is important to make sure you have not been recently infected with HIV when starting PrEP. Truvada is not designed to be used on its own to treat HIV, so using Truvada PrEP if you already have HIV means you are not getting optimal treatment to suppress the virus; you may be increasing your risk of developing drug resistance and limiting your future options for HIV treatment. If you are recently infected with HIV, there is a “[window period](http://www.sfaf.org/hiv-info/testing/hiv-test-window-periods.html?utm_source=PrEPFacts&utm_medium=hyperlink&utm_content=Basics-section&utm_campaign=PrEPFacts-BETABlog)” when traditional HIV antibody tests cannot yet detect the virus. When you ask about starting PrEP, your medical provider or study coordinator may suggest an alternative test that can detect HIV infection earlier.

Information taken from prepfacts.org