

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP): Resources for Patients



What is PEP?

+ Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is a medication taken by mouth after a possible HIV exposure to prevent infection in yourself.

- Think of PEP as Plan B – the sooner you start, the better. Doctors recommend beginning PEP within 24 hours of an exposure and no later than 72 hours after HIV exposure to prevent infection.

+ PEP is not a one-time pill.

- You must take medication 1-2x per day for at least 28 days for it to be effective.
- PEP is generally safe, but some common side effects include nausea or fatigue.
- If you develop a fever, rash, swollen glands, sore throat, or diarrhea, contact your provider right away. These may be early signs of HIV infection.

+ PEP treatment involves testing for HIV before and after treatment.

+ PEP does NOT prevent getting HIV from a future exposure.

- It is always encouraged to follow safer sex practices and other harm reduction strategies, get tested for HIV, know your partners' HIV status, and avoid sharing needles. If you believe you might be exposed to HIV often, consider asking your provider for a Pre-Exposure Prophylactic medication (reference PrEP: Resources for Patients).

More 

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Is PEP right for you?

+ PEP might be right for you if you are HIV negative or unaware of your HIV status and believe you may have been exposed to HIV within the past 72 hours through:

1. Unprotected sex with a partner of unknown HIV status or who has HIV that is not well controlled,
2. Sexual assault,
3. Shared needles.

+ PEP is safe and effective at reducing your risk of becoming infected with HIV when taken properly.

- It is most effective when taken consistently as prescribed and for the full time period.
- If you are frequently exposed to HIV, you can talk to your provider about Pre-Exposure Prophylactic medication (reference PrEP: Resources for Patients).



How can you access and afford PEP?

+ PEP is covered by most private insurance plans, Medicaid, and Medicare. If you are uninsured, ask your medical provider to help you apply for free PEP through medication assistance programs.

- Patients can get PEP from an emergency room. It may also be available at some public health departments or Planned Parenthood clinics.
- If you are a victim of a sexual assault, you may qualify for partial or total reimbursement through the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice. (This reimbursement requires reporting the assault to the police within 72 hours.)

+ PEP treatment requires testing for HIV before and after your course of medication. Here are some options for finding convenient and affordable testing site:

- Denver Public Health has created a comprehensive list of [HIV/STI testing locations](https://tinyurl.com/TestingLoc) (<https://tinyurl.com/TestingLoc>) and associated costs.
- [It Takes a Village](https://tinyurl.com/TakesVillage) (<https://tinyurl.com/TakesVillage>) also provides free HIV/STI testing and counseling specifically for people of color living in the Denver Metro area.
- [The Colorado Health Network \(CHN\)](https://tinyurl.com/CoHealthNet) (<https://tinyurl.com/CoHealthNet>) is Colorado's oldest and largest source of statewide services and programs for people living with HIV or impacted by HIV. They provide HIV/STI testing as well as access to PrEP & PEP.

+ If you live outside of Denver:

- If you live outside of Denver, you can find other [free HIV testing sites](https://tinyurl.com/CoTestLoc) (<https://tinyurl.com/CoTestLoc>) at a location near you through the Colorado AIDS project. CDPHE offers [at home self-testing kits](http://www.idgp.org/TelePrEP) (<http://www.idgp.org/TelePrEP>) if you qualify.