

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Women:

FAQ

1. What is PrEP?

PrEP stands for pre-exposure prophylaxis. It is the use of antiretroviral medication to prevent acquisition of HIV infection. PrEP is used by HIV uninfected people who are at risk of being exposed through sexual contact or injection drug use. At present, the only medication with an FDA-approved indication for PrEP is oral tenofovir disoproxil fumarate-emtricitabine (TDF-FTC) which is available as a fixed combination tablet called Truvada. This medication is also commonly used in the treatment of HIV. **PrEP should be considered a part of a comprehensive prevention plan that includes adherence, risk reduction counseling, HIV prevention education and provision of condoms.**

2. To whom should I offer PrEP?

PrEP may be appropriate for women who meet any of the following criteria: ⁽¹⁾

- Is in an ongoing sexual relationship with an HIV-infected person who is not on anti-retroviral therapy (ART) OR is on ART but is not virologically suppressed OR is within 6 months of initiating ART.
- Is in an HIV serodifferent relationship in which the woman is trying to get pregnant.
- Has been recently diagnosed with early syphilis. Note 55%-60% of syphilis cases in LA County occur in HIV+ persons, so recent syphilis diagnosis is a marker of increased risk for HIV.
- Exchanges sex for money or drugs.
- Injects drugs or hormones that are not prescribed by a medical provider.
- Is in a relationship with a man who has sex with other men or is suspected to be having sex with other men.
- Is requesting PrEP.

3. Who can prescribe PrEP?

Any licensed prescriber can prescribe TDF-FTC as PrEP. Specialization in Infectious Disease or HIV Medicine is NOT required. In fact, primary care providers who see members of the populations at **high risk of HIV on a routine basis should consider offering PrEP to all eligible patients.**

4. How is TDF-FTC for PrEP prescribed?

TDF-FTC for oral PrEP is taken once daily by mouth. ⁽²⁾ No other dosing strategy is currently recommended.

5. How quickly does PrEP provide protection?

Data from pharmacokinetic studies suggest that individuals need to take PrEP for:

- At least 7 days to achieve protective levels in rectal tissue and plasma. ^{(2) (3) (4)}
- At least 20 days to achieve protective levels in cervico-vaginal tissue. ^{(2) (3) (4)}

6. How important is adherence to PrEP for women?

As with all PrEP patients, adherence is important. However, studies indicate that **excellent** adherence for women (>6 doses/week) is critical to ensure protective drug levels in cervico-vaginal tissue. ^{(2) (5) (6) (7)} Women should be advised of this fact at every visit.

7. Is PrEP safe?

TDF-FTC as PrEP is considered safe and well-tolerated for women of child-bearing age. ⁽²⁾

8. Does PrEP interact with hormone-based birth control?

To date, research shows that hormone-based birth control drugs do NOT interact with PrEP. ⁽⁸⁾



9. Can a woman take PrEP while attempting to conceive and/or during pregnancy?

TDF-FTC is considered Pregnancy Class B. ⁽⁹⁾ The Centers for Disease Control recommends PrEP as an option to reduce the risk of HIV acquisition from an HIV-positive male partner during conception. CDC also recommends that women with ongoing risk of HIV acquisition continue PrEP throughout her pregnancy and breastfeeding to protect herself and her infant. ^{(2) (10)}

10. Can a woman breastfeed while on PrEP?

No adverse effects have been found among infants exposed to Tenofovir/Emtricitabine when the medications were taken as part of a treatment regimen for women living with HIV during pregnancy or during breastfeeding. Studies suggest that infants are exposed to very small concentrations of PrEP during breastfeeding. However, no long-term safety studies have been conducted to assess for long-term health problems. ^{(11) (12)}

Additional PrEP Resources for Providers

- PrEP Clinical Tools, including guidelines and a clinical checklist, are available at <http://getprepla.com/information-for-providers>
- A free one-hour CME on PrEP is available at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/dhsp/Providers/PrEPActionKit/PrEP-CME-Info.pdf>

For a list of medical providers prescribing PrEP, go to <http://getprepla.com/provider-directory/>

References

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