

# HIV POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP)

## INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

### WHAT IS PEP?

PEP is a 4 week course of HIV medications you can take to protect yourself from HIV if you believe you've recently been put at risk.

PEP is highly effective but is not always guaranteed to always work. PEP should start as soon as possible (more effective if taken right away) but no later than 72 hours after an exposure. You need to take the medication exactly as prescribed by your medical clinician.

PEP does not protect you from other sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

### WHEN IS PEP USED?

PEP is recommended after an exposure to HIV, such as;

- Unprotected sex with a HIV positive partner who does not have an undetectable viral load (i.e. controlled on medications with regular blood tests to confirm)
- Unprotected anal sex with a casual partner at high risk of HIV (i.e. a man who has sex with other men)
- Unprotected vaginal sex with a person at high risk of HIV, such as a man who has male partners or a person from a country with high rates of HIV
- Sharing injecting or body piercing equipment with a person at high risk of HIV
- Occupational exposure to blood or body fluids from a person at high risk of HIV, or known to be HIV infected without an undetectable viral load

PEP is rarely required for other exposures, such as oral sex or contact with a discarded needle. These situations can be discussed further during the PEP assessment process.

If you are unsure whether you require PEP, you can call the PEP hotline on:  
PH: 1800 737 669 to discuss your situation.

### WHAT DOES TAKING PEP INVOLVE?

If you believe you may require PEP you should urgently attend a sexual health clinic or emergency department for an assessment.

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## ASSESSMENT

- Questions about your exposure and other risks for HIV including sexual activities and injecting drug use
- For sexual exposures, if the partner's HIV status is known and if relevant, their current HIV treatment & last HIV viral load
- An initial blood test to exclude current infection with HIV & other STIs
- Discussion about whether PEP is recommended

## TREATMENT

- If you attend an emergency department, you will usually be given a 7-day starter pack and will need to see a sexual clinic for follow-up care and for the rest of the 4-week course.
- You may experience some mild side effects that usually go away by themselves within 10 days.
- Medication should be taken with food as often as possible
- You should tell the doctor of all other medications you are taking including non-prescription items

## FOLLOW-UP CARE

- If you start PEP, you must arrange a follow-up appointment within 7 days at a sexual health clinic to obtain your test results and ongoing supply of PEP medication.
- You will also be required to repeat testing at 4-6 weeks and then 3 months after the exposure.

<b>Pacific Clinic, Newcastle Sexual Health</b> T: 4016 4536	9am to 4.30pm, Mon-Fri, except Tues 9am to 12.30pm
<b>Clinic 468, Tamworth Sexual Health</b> T: 6764 8080	9am to 4.30pm, Mon to Thur
<b>Taree Sexual Health</b>	Call Pacific Clinic Newcastle to make an appointment

**\*\*Note:** sexual health clinics are closed during the Christmas period and Public Holidays  
Before leaving the emergency department, follow-up should be arranged with the on call infectious diseases physician at John Hunter Hospital during this time.

## PREVENTING HIV TRANSMISSION

During the 3-month follow-up period, you should;

- Use safe sex practices, including condoms for sex to protect sexual partners
- Not share injecting equipment, tattooing or body piercing instruments.
- Not donate blood or blood products, body tissues or sperm

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