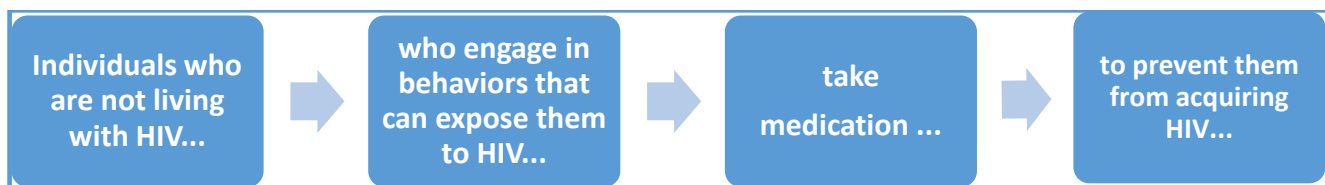


What Support Services Providers Should Know About HIV Clinical Guidelines: Improving Health Outcomes Series

New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute

TOPIC: PrEP to Prevent HIV and Promote Sexual Health

WHAT IS PrEP?



BACKGROUND

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a commonly used biomedical approach for promoting wellness and preventing an unwanted health outcome. In PrEP for HIV, a person who is not living with HIV takes antiretroviral medication to protect them from a possible exposure to HIV. Clinical trials have consistently found PrEP for HIV to be safe and effective for adults and adolescents when taken as prescribed. Expanding access to PrEP is one of the three pillars in New York’s plan to end the AIDS Epidemic. Support services providers who serve people living in situations that place them at risk for HIV have an important role to play in promoting PrEP.

Common Examples of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis

It may seem unusual to give medication to a healthy person, but here are some common examples:

1. A woman taking birth control pills to prevent pregnancy;
2. A traveler taking anti-malaria medications when going to an area where there is high likelihood of exposure to malaria;
3. A person taking antibiotics prior to dental surgery to prevent infection.

THE ROLE OF SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDERS IN PROMOTING PrEP

Support services providers can play an important role in promoting appropriate use of PrEP by:

1. Presenting PrEP as a proactive way for adults and adolescents to promote their sexual health and referring people who can benefit from PrEP to a healthcare provider that prescribes PrEP;
2. Working as part of a team to provide clients who are taking PrEP with condoms, harm reduction support, HIV testing, STI screening, and referrals for other needed support services;
3. Supporting treatment adherence for people on PrEP by reinforcing the importance of taking the medication as prescribed by the healthcare provider;
4. Educating clients that PrEP does not offer protection against other STIs and reinforcing the importance of condom use;
5. Helping clients on PrEP who receive a confirmed positive HIV test result to immediately access healthcare and begin an effective HIV treatment regimen;
6. Educating clients about the cost of PrEP and navigating financial assistance programs.

Who can benefit from PrEP?

New York State HIV Clinical Guidelines indicate that medical providers should discuss PrEP as an HIV/STD prevention option for adults or adolescents who:

- Have unprotected anal or vaginal intercourse with: 1) a partner whose HIV status is unknown; 2) a partner who is living with HIV but not on HIV treatment; or 3) a partner who is living with HIV but not virally suppressed (i.e. does not have an undetectable viral load);
- Have unprotected anal or vaginal intercourse with a partner who is living with HIV, on treatment and virally suppressed but wishes to be on PrEP for additional protection;
- Are attempting to conceive with a partner who is living with HIV;
- Have multiple or anonymous sex partners or, have partners who have multiple or anonymous sex partner;
- Participate in sex parties or have partners who do this;
- Are involved in transactional sex, such as sex for money, drugs, or housing, including commercial sex workers and their clients, or have partners who do this;
- Have been diagnosed with at least one STI in the previous 12 months;
- Use of mood-altering substances during sex, such as alcohol, methamphetamine, cocaine, and ecstasy;
- Inject substances, or have partners who inject substances, including illicit drugs and hormones;
- Are receiving post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and have ongoing high-risk behavior or have used multiple courses of PEP;
- Self-identify as being at risk without disclosing specific risk behaviors;
- Acknowledge the possibility of, or, anticipates risk behaviors in the near future.

PrEP TO PROMOTE SEXUAL HEALTH: Sexual pleasure is an important part of a person’s overall sense of wellness. PrEP is a proactive way for a person to take charge of their sexual health. PrEP can enhance sexual pleasure by reducing worry about HIV, facilitating regular screening for STIs, and connecting people to a healthcare provider who supports their sexual health and pleasure. Support services providers have an important role to play educating their clients and communities about sexual health and promoting PrEP as a positive way of supporting their own health, the health of their partners, and the health of their larger social networks.

INDIVIDUALIZING PrEP: NYS Clinical Guidelines outline PrEP as a flexible approach to promoting sexual health and preventing HIV. The following elements of PrEP can be negotiated between the individual and the healthcare provider, with ongoing assistance from support services providers, as needed:

1. Same Day Start: In most instances, individuals should be able to begin taking PrEP on the same day as their first appointment with the health care provider for PrEP. HIV testing should be conducted as part of the first visit. Individuals may begin taking PrEP while the results of the HIV test are pending. In cases where the result indicates that the person is living with HIV and the individual has already started PrEP, the healthcare provider should deliver the result and begin the person on an effective HIV treatment regimen as soon as possible, preferably on the same day that the diagnosis is available.

2. **Flexible Schedule of Medical Appointments:** Healthcare providers should work with each person to determine how often medical appointments are needed to manage PrEP. For some people, appointments may be every three months, but others may need only one or two appointments with the healthcare provider per year. People who need additional support with harm reduction or treatment adherence can access it from a conveniently located support services provider.
3. **Screening for HIV/STIs and Other Bloodwork:** Individuals taking PrEP can work with their healthcare provider to make a plan for HIV/STI testing and other bloodwork. In some cases, the person may return to the healthcare providers office for testing but in others, it may be most convenient to have the testing done at a nearby lab, community-based organization or other facility. STI screening can sometimes be done by having a person do their own specimen collection via self-swabbing of the mouth, vagina or anus. Arrangements should be made to ensure that the results are forwarded to the healthcare provider.
4. **Medication and Dosing Options:** Men who have sex with men (MSM) may work with their healthcare provider to choose from two different PrEP medications, Truvada or Descovy. MSM also have the option of daily PrEP or on-demand PrEP.

	Daily PrEP	On-Demand PrEP
Who is it for?	People of all genders who have risk for HIV from sex or sharing injection equipment.	Only for MSM who have predictable periods of sexual risk for HIV and are able to begin taking medication 2-24 hours before having sex.
How does it work?	The person takes one pill every day.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An MSM takes 2 pills, 2-24 hours before having sex. 2. An MSM continues to take one pill each day they have sex. 3. An MSM takes one pill once a day for two days after the last time they have sex.
What are the benefits of each method?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Works for people of all genders. 2. A person has a simple daily habit of taking the medication. 3. Provides consistent protection. 4. Able to engage in sex or sharing injection equipment at any time with full protection. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MSM can take the medication only for the period of time when it is needed. 2. Possible fewer side effects.

HELP A PERSON FIND A PrEP PROVIDER: Use the NYSDOH voluntary [Provider Directory](#).

ASSISTANCE WITH PAYING FOR PrEP: Medicaid covers the costs associated with PrEP with no co-pays. Some health plans offering prescription drug coverage cover PrEP with no co-pays. Financial assistance is available for people who are uninsured, underinsured or who have significant co-pays for the medication, lab work or appointments. To learn about financial assistance, click on [this link](#).

For the full *PrEP to Prevent HIV and Promote Sexual Health* clinical guidelines visit: <https://www.hivguidelines.org/prep-for-prevention/>.