

## FAQ's on PEP

### What is PEP?

Oral PEP – or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis is a treatment that someone who is HIV negative can take after a likely exposure to HIV to reduce their likelihood of becoming infected with HIV.

### What is the treatment?

In BC, taking PEP means taking multiple HIV medications (modern anti-retroviral drugs) for 4 weeks.

The most common side effects are impacts on the gastrointestinal system, which can be unpleasant and contributes to some finding it difficult to consistently take the medication. The more doses of PEP that are missed, the less likely the treatment is to be effective at preventing an HIV infection.

### When is PEP started?

PEP must be started within 72 hours of the likely exposure. However, PEP is more likely to be effective the earlier treatment begins.

### How would you access PEP?

If you think PEP might be a good option for you, and your local sexual health clinic is open, they are an excellent resource to have honest conversation about your risk level and whether PEP is a strong option for you. If it is, they can be a great asset in navigating the health system through accessing PEP, and a valuable support through treatment. In Victoria, good options include the Cool Aid Clinic on Johnson, the Sexual Health Unit on Cook, or Island Sexual Health on Quadra.

If a sexual health clinic is not available, it is best to go straight to the nearest emergency room. The Doctor at the Emergency Room will need to call the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS to have a PEP treatment released through the Vancouver based NPEP (non-occupational exposure PEP) Pilot, which has been unofficially extended throughout the province and will fund PEP treatment. Unfortunately, because this is relatively new information, it is possible that you may need to do some educating as the Doctor may not be familiar with PEP or with these processes. If the Doctor doesn't have it, the phone number to call at the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS for the NPEP pilot is 604-631-1518.

### What is the eligibility for PEP?

In order to be eligible for PEP in BC, you most likely need to qualify for the BCCDC's NPEP Pilot. Eligibility may vary in cases of sexual assault, or occupational exposure.

The qualifications for the BCCDC's NPEP Pilot are as follows:

- The exposure occurred within 72 hours.
- The exposure occurred through sexual contact or needle sharing.
- The potential PEP recipient was not infected, or was not known to be infected with HIV
- The "source" of the exposure was HIV positive, or an unknown HIV status, and belongs to a group with a high prevalence of HIV (e.g. people who use injection drugs, men who have sex with men, and sex workers)

### Where can I learn more about PEP?

There is more information available about PEP on the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS website, as well as on CATIE's website, and as always, you can reach us at AVI at 250-384-2366.