

MY PrEP

BE AN ADVOCATE FOR YOUR HEALTH



**YOUR GUIDE TO
NAVIGATING
HEALTH CARE FOR
HIV PREVENTION**



**AIDS FREE
PITTSBURGH**

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Your journey doesn't end here. AIDS Free Pittsburgh is here for you.



AIDS FREE PITTSBURGH

AIDS Free Pittsburgh (AFP) is a public health movement to end the HIV epidemic in Allegheny County by 2030. AIDS Free Pittsburgh is a collaborative initiative comprised of government agencies, healthcare institutions, and community-based organizations that strive to support and improve the care of people living with HIV/AIDS, as well as communities most impacted by HIV.

WHAT IS PrEP?




HIV is a virus that attacks the body's immune system, making it harder to fight off diseases. If left untreated, HIV can lead to AIDS and death. With modern treatment, people with HIV live long, healthy lives. HIV is spread by contact with bodily fluids (like blood, semen, and vaginal fluids) during sex or when sharing needles.

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is a medication that reduces the chance of getting HIV when taken as directed. It is safe and effective, reducing the risk of HIV from sex by over 99%. PrEP will protect you from HIV, but you should keep using protection for STIs and pregnancy.

This booklet is your guide to PrEP, finding a local PrEP provider, and becoming an advocate for your own sexual health.

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MY PrEP OPTIONS



Truvada (FTC/TDF)

- Daily pill
- Safe and very effective
- Approved for adults & teens
- Approved for all genders
- Approved for all HIV exposure types
- Side effects: headache, nausea, fatigue
- Rare effects: kidney & bone problems
- Generic version available



Descovy (FTC/TAF)

- Daily pill
- Safe and very effective
- Approved for adults & teens
- Approved for cis men & trans women
- Approved for non-vaginal sex HIV exposure
- Side effects: headache, nausea, diarrhea
- Rare effects: weight gain & cholesterol
- No generic version



Apretude (CAB)

- Every-other-month injection
- Safe and very effective
- Approved for adults & teens
- Approved for all genders
- Approved for all HIV exposure types
- Side effects: pain and redness at shot
- No generic version

All PrEP options are safe and very effective at preventing HIV when taken as instructed. The “best” option is the one that’s best for you.

PrEP is recommended for people who are more likely to be impacted by HIV. HIV is spread by unsafe sex or injection drug use. Check ✓ every true statement and add up the points to help decide if PrEP is right for you.

Increases Risk:

- ☐ I have had sex (anal, vaginal, or oral).
- ☐ I have had sex without a condom or barrier.
- ☐ I have had sex with multiple people.
- ☐ I have had a sexually transmitted infection (STI/STD).
- ☐ I mainly receive/bottom during sex.
- ☐ I have had sex after taking drugs or alcohol.
- ☐ I have had sex with someone living with HIV.
- ☐ I trade sex for money or drugs.
- ☐ I have injected drugs.
- ☐ I have shared works/needles with someone else.
- ☐ I have been prescribed PEP after an HIV exposure.

Decreases Risk:

- ☐ I have 0-1 sex partner.
- ☐ I always use a condom/barrier.
- ☐ I get HIV tests routinely.
- ☐ My partner(s) get HIV tests.
- ☐ I know my partner(s) status.
- ☐ I mainly insert/top during sex.
- ☐ I don't get semen or cum in me.
- ☐ I am sober during sex.
- ☐ I only use new, sterile needles.
- ☐ If my partner(s) have HIV, they are undetectable with treatment.

More Points

PrEP will keep you safer

HIV RISK IS A

SPECTRUM


Fewer Points

PrEP is still an option

MY HIV RISK QUIZ




FINDING YOUR PrEP PROVIDER



[HIV TESTING](#)[PREP](#)[LIVING WITH HIV](#)[PROVIDER RESOURCES](#)[ABOUT US](#)

Find PrEP Near Me




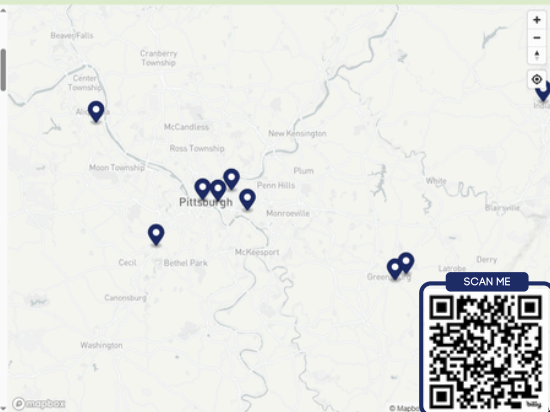
Allies for Health + Wellbeing
5953 Penn Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15206, USA
(412) 345-7456
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[Visit Website](#)

- HIV Medical Care
- HIV Testing
- STD Testing
- PrEP / PEP
- Medical Case Management
- Non-Medical Case Management
- Transportation
- Food Assistance
- Housing Assistance
- Legal Services
- Emergency Financial Assistance
- Counseling / Mental Health
- LGBTQIA+ Services
- Transgender Services
- Hormone Therapy
- HIV Education
- Ryan White Part B
- Health Insurance

6.65 miles away



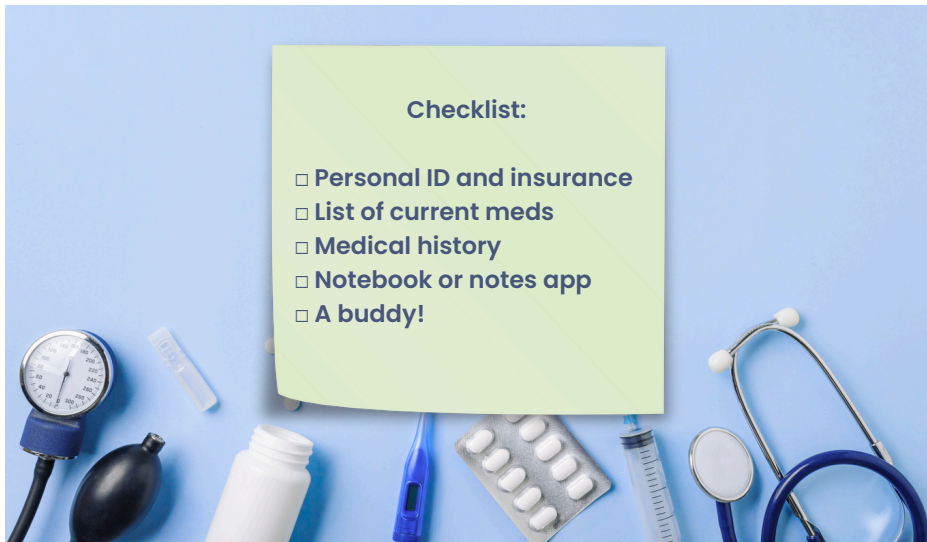




AIDS Free Pittsburgh has a directory of local PrEP providers throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania. Visit the Resource Finder at AIDSFreePittsburgh.org, enter your zip code, and discover options near you. Your usual primary care provider can also prescribe and manage PrEP.

When you're looking for a new healthcare provider, search the internet and ask your friends for recommendations. Also consider other factors about your new provider:

- Is your provider close enough to travel by car, bus, or however else you prefer?
- Is your provider in your health insurance network?
- Are you able to schedule telehealth or virtual visits if you want?
- Do you feel respected at your appointments? You can always change providers.



PREP-PARING FOR YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

You've found a healthcare provider and you know which PrEP option you want. Now, it's time for your first appointment. Before you go, prepare a list of questions to ask your provider so you don't forget in the moment. There's room below to jot down your questions. Bring this list, plus any important documents like your ID, your health insurance, and a list of current medications.

Consider bringing a trusted friend, family member, or partner to your first appointment. You might find it easier to have someone there for support, than to go in alone.



AT THE APPOINTMENT



1. The Conversation

Your provider will ask questions about your medical history, sexual health, and potential HIV risk to determine if PrEP is a good fit for you. Some of these questions may feel personal, but they help your provider make sure PrEP is the right option for you. You can always ask why a question is being asked or skip any questions that feel uncomfortable.

If your provider isn't familiar with PrEP, AIDS Free Pittsburgh has resources for them, too!



2. The Lab Tests

Before starting PrEP, your provider will take a blood sample to run tests. PrEP is only for people who are HIV-negative, so it's important to confirm your status. Other tests check your overall health to make sure PrEP is safe for you with kidney function tests (to make sure your kidneys can process the medicine) and a hepatitis B test (to protect you from flare-ups if you start or stop PrEP). Make sure to ask your provider how and when you'll get the results.



3. The PrEP!

If you get PrEP pills, then your doctor will send your prescription to your preferred pharmacy. Make sure you get contact information in case the pharmacy has any trouble filling your prescription.

For injectable PrEP, you'll schedule your first shot with your doctor. You can also take cabotegravir (the same medicine) by pill for the first month, so you can try it out without the commitment.

The cost of medicine, provider visits, and lab testing can add up. Luckily, PrEP is covered by most health insurance plans. The Affordable Care Act requires that Medicaid and private insurances cover PrEP. You can double-check which medications are covered before your first appointment by calling your insurance provider directly, or searching online for their prescription drug list (also called a formulary).

If you don't have health insurance, or if your co-pays are unaffordable even with insurance, there are programs to help you. Ask your provider for help enrolling in the programs below.

Generic medications are often cheaper than name-brand, but just as effective. There is a generic option for Truvada (FTC/TDF).

PAYING FOR PrEP: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



Money shouldn't keep anyone from taking PrEP if they need it.

1. Gilead Co-Pay

Assistance:

- \$7,200 per year
- Truvada or Descovy
- Insurance required

2. Apretude Savings:

- \$7,850 per year
- Apretude
- Insurance required

3. Gilead Advancing

Access:

- Truvada or Descovy
- No insurance

4. ViiV Patient

Assistance:

- Apretude
- No insurance

5. PAN Foundation

- \$2,500 per year
- All PrEP options
- No citizenship

6. PAF Foundation

- \$5000 per year
- All PrEP options
- No insurance

7. Good Days

- \$2000 per year
- All PrEP options
- Insurance required



WHILE YOU'RE ON PrEP



The most important thing to remember for daily PrEP pills is **consistency is key**. You need to take PrEP every day, around the same time. Set a phone alarm, write it in your calendar, or add it to your daily routine to make sure you remember.

Mild side effects like headaches and nausea are normal for daily PrEP pills. These are usually the worst in the first week, and go away after a month or so. Hang in there! You can take PrEP with or without food, and at any time of day. Some people say taking PrEP with a meal or at night helps reduce nausea.

The most common side effect for injectable PrEP is pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site. An ice pack or warm compress can help soothe any soreness after your shot.

Side effects shouldn't be unbearable. If they interrupt your day-to-day life, talk to your doctor.

GOING OFF PrEP

Life happens, and there might come a time when PrEP is no longer right for you. When you're ready to stop taking PrEP, **talk to your healthcare provider**. Don't ghost them — you need them to help you stop PrEP safely.

- For daily PrEP pills, keep taking PrEP for 28 days after your last potential exposure (so, about a month after the last time you had sex or shared works). Ask your healthcare provider about how to discard any pills you haven't used.
- For injectable PrEP, your doctor will work with you for longer to help you stop it safely. Apretude lasts longer in your body, so this process might take up to 12 months. This is slow, but important — if you acquire HIV during this time, it can become resistant to treatment.

No matter what happens, you still have methods to protect yourself from HIV. Plus, you can safely start PrEP again whenever you need it. You won't develop resistance to PrEP if you follow your healthcare provider's advice. You'll just need to start over with appointments and lab testing.



If you have hepatitis B, stopping PrEP suddenly can cause severe liver damage. Talk to your healthcare provider before ending PrEP so you're as safe as possible.

PrEP ON-DEMAND

2-1-1 for anal sex is an alternative to taking Truvada every day. It is not approved by the FDA, but studies have shown that it is almost as effective as PrEP for cisgender men who have sex with men. Transgender people, cisgender women, people who inject drugs, and people taking Descovy should take their PrEP every day as recommended. If you plan your sex ahead of time and want to take PrEP less often, talk to your healthcare provider first.



FREQUENTLY ASKED

Q: My healthcare provider says they don't know much about PrEP. What can I do?

A: AIDS Free Pittsburgh offers a PrEP toolkit for providers with more resources on our website. Otherwise, you can ask for a referral to another provider. You deserve care that meets your needs.

Q: Is PrEP the only thing I need to keep myself safe during sex?

A: No. PrEP is effective at preventing HIV. To prevent other sexually transmitted infections and to prevent pregnancy, you'll need to use other tools like condoms.

Q: What happens if my pharmacy tells me they don't carry PrEP?

A: Ask the pharmacist to place a special order, which might take a few days. If you need PrEP more quickly, consider switching to a different pharmacy. Mail-order pharmacies can ship PrEP to you.

Q: What happens if I miss a dose of PrEP?

A: Missing a dose every once in a while is no big deal. Just take the missed pill as soon as you remember, or at your regular time the next day. Don't take any extra pills to make it up. If you miss several days or are having trouble taking it consistently, talk about it with your doctor.

Q: I'm undocumented. Are there ways for me to get PrEP?

A: Yes. Many local providers can provide PrEP without proof of ID, residency, or immigration status. Some payment assistance programs from Gilead or ViiV require proof of US residency.

Q: I'm on someone else's insurance. Can I get PrEP without them finding out about it?

A: Contact your insurance provider and ask about their privacy practices. They might send an Explanation of Benefits letter to the primary policyholder, but you can ask them not to. Alternatively, look into free or sliding-scale PrEP providers who can help you without insurance.

Q: Can I take PrEP even if I'm taking hormones, birth control, or other medications?

A: Yes, PrEP is safe to use with most medications, including gender-affirming hormone therapy and contraceptives. Always tell your provider what other medications you're taking to make sure.

Q: Is it safe to take PrEP while pregnant or breastfeeding?

A: Yes, PrEP is a great way to protect you and your baby from HIV. Let your provider know if you're pregnant or planning to become pregnant. PrEP does not prevent pregnancy.

Q: I have extra pills I'm not going to use, or I ran out. Can I share with a friend?

A: No. PrEP is only for people who test negative for HIV. If someone takes PrEP without the required labs, and they have HIV, their HIV can become resistant to treatment.

Q: Does PrEP only help me?

A: No, PrEP helps you, your partner(s), and your whole community. By taking PrEP, you're doing your part in ending the HIV epidemic and keeping our communities safe. Thank you!

EXTRA RESOURCES

PrEP Toolkit for Providers: AIDS Free Pittsburgh

Just like this resource contains everything you need to know to find PrEP near you, AFP offers tools to help providers learn more about PrEP and how to safely prescribe it. Share with your provider!

aidsfreepittsburgh.org/provider-resources

PrEP Finder: AIDS Free Pittsburgh

Enter your zip code, select what services you're looking for, and get a list of healthcare providers in your area who can prescribe PrEP.

aidsfreepittsburgh.org/prep-finder

PrEP Finder: National

PrEP Locator is a national directory of PrEP providers in the US.

prepolator.org

Learn More About PrEP: Allegheny County Health Department

Get educated, find a provider, and more local resources.

alleghenycounty.us

Learn More About PrEP: Please PrEP Me

More resources about PrEP options, paying for PrEP, and extra information for cisgender women, transgender women, and youth.

pleaseprepme.org

Personal Stories: Greater Than HIV

View personal testimonies of real people who are Powered By PrEP.

greaterthan.org/prep

Truvada, Descovy, and Apretude: SFAP

Compare the differences between PrEP options.

sfaf.org/resource-library



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