

LET'S TALK SEXUAL HEALTH

Simple Steps to Protect Yourself From HIV

Why this matters

Sexual health is part of overall health, just like blood pressure or dental checkups. Talking about it can feel awkward, but it helps you:

- Find HIV prevention options that fit **your life**
- Catch HIV early if exposed
- Protect yourself and your partners from other sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

If you're sexually active (or might be), you deserve clear information and zero judgment. Sexual health is a normal part of being human.

When should I think about HIV prevention?

Everyone deserves to receive protection! You may want extra protection if any of these have been true in the past **6–12 months**:

- ☐ Sex without a condom
- ☐ Not always knowing a partner's HIV status
- ☐ A recent STI (such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, or syphilis)
- ☐ Multiple partners (you or your partner)
- ☐ Sharing injection equipment (needles or syringes)
- ☐ A relationship where one partner has HIV and the other does not

Not sure? That's common. A health care provider or pharmacist can help you figure it out.



Your HIV prevention options

(choose what fits your life)

PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) = prevention before exposure

PrEP, or **pre-exposure prophylaxis**, is medicine that helps prevent HIV for people who do not have HIV and may be exposed through sex or injection drug use.

PrEP is recommended for many sexually active adults and adolescents and can be prescribed to anyone who asks about it.

PrEP at a glance

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)

PrEP is medicine that helps prevent HIV for people who do not have HIV and may be exposed through sex or injection drug use.

PrEP comes in different forms:

DAILY PILLS



Taken once a day. Works well if a daily routine fits your life

LONG-ACTING INJECTIONS



Given by a health care provider less often, such as:

- Every **2 months** (cabotegravir)
- **Twice a year** (lenacapavir)

Your clinic can tell you what options are available and what might work best for you

Important: When taken as recommended, PrEP can reduce the risk of getting HIV from sex by **up to 99%**, but it does not protect against other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), so condoms can still be helpful.

Condoms, testing, and treatment

- **Condoms** help reduce the risk of HIV and other STIs
- **Regular HIV and STI testing** is an important part of prevention, especially with new or multiple partners
- People living with HIV who take treatment consistently can reach an **undetectable viral load**, meaning they **cannot sexually transmit HIV** (*often called* Undetectable = Untransmittable, *or* U=U)

What happens if I ask about PrEP?

Most visits are straightforward and supportive. They often include:

- An **HIV test** to confirm you are HIV-negative before starting PrEP
- Possible lab tests, depending on the PrEP option
- Screening for other STIs
- A prevention plan that matches your preferences and routine

These visits are about support and making sure you are healthy.

How to start the conversation

You can say:

- *“I want to talk about HIV prevention.”*
- *“Can we discuss PrEP options?”*
- *“What would work best for my routine?”*
- *“What are my privacy and cost options?”*

Health care providers are there to help you make informed choices.



Find testing, PrEP, and care (United States)

CDC GetTested
gettested.cdc.gov



Free, fast, and confidential HIV and STI testing

HIV.gov Services Locator
locator.hiv.gov



HIV testing, PrEP, care, and support services

***Tip:** Community health centers, public health clinics, and LGBTQ+ clinics often provide confidential services.*

Cost and coverage

PrEP and HIV testing are often covered by private insurance, Medicaid, or available at low or no cost through clinics and assistance programs.

If cost is a concern, you can say:

- “I’m worried about affordability. What options are available to me?”

When to get help quickly

Seek urgent medical care if:

- You may have had a recent HIV exposure
- You have symptoms that concern you after a high-risk exposure
- You experienced sexual assault

Medical care can address immediate needs and help connect you to prevention and support.



QUICK TAKEAWAY

1 Get tested

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2 Ask about PrEP

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3 Choose prevention options that fit your life

*HIV prevention
works best when
it is informed,
supportive, and
tailored to you.*