

# PrEP, an effective way to protect against HIV

There were 329 new cases of HIV reported in Montréal in 2023, of which 141 were in gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men (gbMSM). This is about 2 of every 5 HIV cases.

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## What is PrEP?

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a medication that prevents people who do not have HIV (HIV-negative) from getting HIV. This medication protects people when they are exposed to the virus during sexual activities.

- PrEP comes in the form of a pill.
- PrEP prevents HIV from reproducing and settling in immune cells. It consists of antiretrovirals (ARVs or medications used to treat HIV).
- PrEP is effective if taken as directed.
- The side effects of PrEP are usually mild.

## Who is PrEP for?

PrEP is recommended for **people who do not have HIV but may be exposed to the virus.**

Some groups of people who are more likely to be exposed to HIV, and could benefit from PrEP, include:

- Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM)
- Trans women
- Heterosexual people whose sexual partners have HIV and a high viral load
- People who inject drugs

**Important:** If you are wondering if you could benefit from PrEP, talk to a healthcare professional.

You can take an online test at [maprep.org](https://maprep.org) to determine if PrEP could be useful for you. This test is confidential and based on current Quebec government recommendations.

## How to get PrEP?

Finding out how you can support your sexual health is always a good idea.

Here is a list of places where PrEP can be prescribed and where your questions can be answered:

- **A family doctor (prioritize this option if you have one).**
- A licensed healthcare professional at one of the following network institutions:
  - [SIDEP + de la Visitation](#)
  - [Clinique l'Actuel](#)
  - [Prelib](#)
  - [Clinique Quorum](#)
  - [Clinique Médicale Urbaine du Quartier Latin](#)
  - [Clinique la Licorne](#)
  - [Centre Médical Mieux-Être \(CMME\)](#)
  - [Medical and nursing clinic \(for Université de Montréal students\)](#)
  - [Concordia Health Services \(for Concordia students\)](#)
  - [McGill Student Wellness Hub \(for McGill students\)](#)
  - [Head & Hands \(for 15- 25-year-olds\)](#)

Other clinics may offer the medication, so don't limit yourself to the clinics listed here; inform yourself about the services of your usual clinic.

## PrEP continuously or on-demand?

PrEP can be taken in two ways:

- **Continuously:** 1 pill every day.
- **On-demand:** pills taken before and after sexual activity.

Discuss the pros and cons of these options with a doctor or healthcare professional.

For visual examples of the different ways to take PrEP go to: [How to take PrEP?](#) on [maprep.org](https://maprep.org) (in French only).

## During the treatment

People taking PrEP are encouraged to have regular follow-ups with a healthcare professional to screen for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and to monitor for rare side effects of the medication.

PrEP is one of many ways to protect against HIV. Regular screenings for HIV and other STIs, open conversations with your sexual partners, and using condoms all help reduce the risk of HIV transmission.

## Resources and information

For more information on PrEP:

- [Maprep.org](https://www.maprep.org)
- [CATIE](https://www.catie.ca/en)

For psychosocial support:

- [REZO](https://www.rezo.ca)
- [AIDS Community Care Montréal \(ACCM\)](https://www.aidscommunitycare.ca)
- [GAP-VIES](https://www.gap-vies.ca)
- [Centre Action Sida Montréal \(CASM\)](https://www.casmmontreal.ca)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How much does PrEP cost in Quebec?

- PrEP is covered by public (RAMQ) and private drug insurance plans. If you have a RAMQ card, you pay a maximum of \$100 per month deductible for all your medications.
- PrEP is free for certain individuals, including:
  - Students under 25 year of age who live with their parents
  - People receiving social assistance
  - People with certain private insurance plans

### Does PrEP have any side effects?

Between 1 and 10 out of every 100 people who take PrEP experience side effects. The most common signs and symptoms include:

- Nausea

- Vomiting
- Headache
- Dizziness

In general, these effects improve within days or weeks after starting the medication. Very rarely, PrEP can affect the bones or kidneys. This is why blood tests are required as part of monitoring for these effects.

## **Does PrEP protect against other sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STIs) ?**

**PrEP only protects against HIV.** Regular screening tests every 3 months help detect other sexually transmitted infections. In addition to PrEP and regular testing, using condoms or dental dams during sexual activity reduces the risk of transmitting other sexually transmitted infections, such as syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhea.

## **What is PEP?**

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is an emergency medication for people who have been potentially exposed to HIV and helps prevent infection. This pill-based treatment must start within a maximum of 72 hours after potential exposure to the virus. PEP pills need to be taken every day for 28 days. PEP can be requested at an emergency room, a family doctor, or at a sexual health clinic.