

PEP

[Post-Exposure Prophylaxis] -

FAST FACTS:

- PEP is 4 weeks of anti-HIV drugs that may prevent you from becoming HIV positive after a risk exposure.
- Act fast - call the PEP hotline on 1800 022 226 as soon as possible after potential exposure and within 72 hours (3 days).
- PEP drugs must be taken exactly as prescribed and may have side effects.
- PEP is not a 'morning after pill' and not a vaccine or cure for HIV/AIDS. It can't replace safe sex and safe injecting practices.

PEP – a time to RETHINK?

If your PEP treatment was successful and you didn't become HIV positive, that is good news to be celebrated. It is also a good time to think about why you needed the treatment in the first place:

- How did you deal with the risk of HIV before this experience?
- What might you need to change about how you are having sex or injecting?
- How much do you feel in control of your health and safety?
- What other changes may you need to make to stay healthy and safe?

Consider talking it through with someone who will listen and who knows about protecting yourself and your sex partners from HIV. Counselling and support services are listed below.

Act Fast!

This brochure was produced by

Gay Men's Health

Gay Men's Health Reception: (08) 8334 1606

Man2Man InfoLine (City Callers): 8334 1617

Man2Man InfoLine (Country Callers): 1800 671 582

Email: gmhealth@gmhealth.org.au

Web: www.acsa.org.au/gmh.html



a program of the

AIDS Council of South Australia Inc.

Darling House: 64 Fullarton Road, Norwood SA 5067

PO Box 907, Kent Town SA 5071

Phone: (08) 8334 1611

Toll Free: 1800 888 559

Email: information@acsa.org.au

Web: www.acsa.org.au



PEP

Act Fast!

72 hours is what you've got

Call **1800 022 226**

WHAT is PEP?

PEP or 'Post – Exposure Prophylaxis' is a 4 week course of medication that may avoid HIV infection after being exposed to the virus. It is not a 'morning – after pill' and it is not guaranteed to work. Practising safer sex by using condoms and water-based lubricant is still the best protection against HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections.

WHO is PEP for?

PEP is available to any person who has been assessed as having been exposed to a significant risk of HIV transmission in the last 72 hours. Knowing about PEP is especially important if you have a regular sex partner whose HIV status is different from yours.

WHEN should I take PEP?

To have the best chance of working, PEP is best started within a few hours of being exposed to HIV, and up to 72 hours, depending on the degree of risk.

WHERE can I get PEP?

Call 1800 022 226. This phone line is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

You will be asked to describe what happened.

Registered Nurses (male and female) on the phone line, who have received training in HIV risk exposure, will assess whether you require PEP.

If there has been a significant risk you will be referred to the nearest clinic (during business hours) or to a hospital Emergency Department (outside of business hours).

At the clinic or Emergency Department you will be seen by a doctor who will conduct another assessment to confirm that you do require PEP.

PEP Drugs need to be authorised by a specialist Doctor.

How does PEP work?

There is evidence that HIV may take a few days from the time of exposure to establish itself in the body. HIV first enters some cells, then copies itself and spreads to other cells. PEP drugs aim to prevent HIV from multiplying in those first cells. Without having produced more HIV, the cells then die naturally within a short time and infection can be avoided.

What is a RISK EXPOSURE?

Risk exposure means that HIV infected body fluids (blood, semen or vaginal fluid) have entered your bloodstream. The most common risk exposures are:

- Unprotected anal sex or vaginal sex
- Broken or slipped condoms during protected anal sex or vaginal sex
- Sharing injecting equipment.

Call 1800 022 226 to undertake an anonymous risk assessment with a Registered Nurse.

Act Fast!

What happens during the ASSESSMENT?

The nurse will assess the level of risk you have been exposed to and then decide whether to recommend PEP. The treatment can have significant side effects so it is important to weigh up the benefits against the drawbacks.

The phone line nurse and the doctor will ask detailed and personal questions about the risk exposure such as:

- The type of sex you had
- How you injected drugs
- What you know about the HIV status of the other person

At your first clinic appointment for PEP, you will be tested for HIV. This is to determine your HIV status. If you are already HIV positive, PEP could be harmful and your course of PEP medication will be stopped.

What is involved in TAKING PEP?

PEP treatment is a combination of two or three anti-HIV drugs called 'anti-retrovirals'.

In South Australia, most people requiring PEP will be put on a

drug called 'Combivir.' Combivir must be taken twice a day for four weeks.

For PEP to work, you will need to take the drugs exactly as prescribed, with a strict dosing schedule.

If you don't take the drugs as prescribed, the virus can become resistant to them. This could limit your future treatment options should you become HIV positive.

If you require PEP, you will be given a 5 day 'Starter Pack' of PEP drugs when you first visit the clinic or Emergency Department.

You must go to a clinic for a follow-up appointment before the 5 day starter pack runs out.

What are the SIDE EFFECTS of PEP drugs?

The treatment used for PEP consists of powerful drugs that can cause serious side effects. Most people who have used PEP report that they experienced some abdominal pain, diarrhoea and/or headache throughout the 4 weeks.

What about SEX WHILE ON PEP?

You can still have sex, but don't risk further HIV exposure to yourself or others by having unsafe sex or sharing injecting equipment while you are taking PEP. If you need support in changing the way you have sex, contact one of the counselling or support services on the back of this brochure.

What about OTHER DRUGS WHILE ON PEP?

PEP medications can affect the way other drugs (prescription or non-prescription) work in the body. It is important that you discuss with your doctor any other drugs that you are taking or intend to take.

What happens AFTER PEP?

PEP can prevent HIV infection, but there is no guarantee. The PEP guidelines recommend that you are tested for HIV before you begin PEP and then one, three and six months afterwards. Counselling will be provided before and after each test.