

What is PEP?

PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) is a treatment that may prevent HIV infection and is available to anyone who thinks they may have been exposed to HIV within the last 72 hours. It is a combination of anti-HIV drugs that must be taken exactly as prescribed at very specific times over a four-week period. These are powerful drugs that can cause side effects and many people who have taken the drugs reported that they experienced considerable discomfort from abdominal pain, diarrhoea and/or headaches throughout the four weeks. Sticking to the strict medication routine however is essential to give the treatments a chance to work effectively.

When to use PEP?

It is extremely important that a person, who may have been exposed to HIV through contact with blood or body fluids from an HIV positive person, seeks treatment as soon as possible. PEP may prevent infection for anybody who has engaged in unprotected anal or vaginal intercourse (including condom breakage) with a partner who is HIV positive, or shared a needle with a person who is HIV positive. PEP is most effective when taken immediately after exposure to HIV, preferably within two hours - but it may still be effective if taken within 72 hours (3 days) of exposure.

Where to get PEP?

PEP must be prescribed by a doctor and is available from the clinics listed on the back of this brochure.

Anyone wishing to access PEP should telephone one of these services for opening hours, make an appointment if necessary and then advise them that PEP may be required. People should not feel anxious about discussing PEP with the trained clinical staff members of these services.

Even if the risk seems minimal or if unsure about the need for PEP, people should discuss the matter with a doctor. In addition, staff members at the Queensland AIDS Council (QuAC) are able to listen, and provide information about PEP.

Does PEP work?

It is strongly believed that PEP may be responsible for preventing HIV infection following an exposure to infected blood or bodily fluid. In the case of occupational exposure in a workplace (eg. needlestick injury in a clinic), PEP has been used for a number of years and has been effective in most cases. Trials in California, and in New South Wales, have also shown the use of PEP in cases of exposure to HIV from social behaviours to be effective for patients who completed the full course of PEP.

Note well: What PEP is not.

- PEP is not pleasant to take.
- PEP is not a guarantee that HIV infection will be prevented, but it is thought to decrease the chances of infection occurring.
- PEP is not a 'morning after pill'.
- PEP will not make people immune to future HIV exposures. People still need to practise safe sex and in the case of injecting drug users, safer injecting practices to prevent HIV infection. If you are exposed to HIV again in the future you should seek urgent medical advice from an HIV treatments doctor.

Queensland Health Websites

The Queensland Health Website offers information for the general public on a range of issues including: HIV/AIDS; Hepatitis C; Sexually Transmissible Infections; Sexual Assault and; Women's and Men's Health:

www.health.qld.gov.au/sexhealth/

Queensland Health also has a website for adolescents, which explains HIV, risk behaviours, safe sex practices and safer injecting behaviours:

www.istaysafe.com

PEP

A treatment that may prevent people who have been exposed to HIV in the last 72 hours from becoming infected.

Information and Assistance

Specialist HIV Services

AIDS Medical Unit Brisbane _____ 3224 5526

Sexual Health Clinics

Brisbane City _____ 3227 8666

Princess Alexandra _____ 3240 5881

Cairns _____ 4050 6205

Gold Coast _____ 5576 9033

Ipswich _____ 3817 2428

Logan _____ 3240 5881

Mackay _____ 4968 3881

Mt Isa _____ 4744 4805

Palm Island _____ 4770 1144

Redcliffe/Caboolture _____ 3883 7472

Rockhampton _____ 4920 6262

Sunshine Coast _____ 5476 2489

Thursday Island _____ 4069 0413

Toowoomba _____ 4631 6446

Townsville _____ 4778 9600

Accident and Emergency Departments of major hospitals are listed in the telephone directory under 'Hospitals'.

QuAC Offices

Brisbane _____ 3017 1777

Cairns _____ 4051 1028

Gold Coast _____ 5575 6966

Sunshine Coast _____ 5441 1222

Townsville _____ 4721 1384

QPP Offices

Allen Street Centre, Brisbane _____ 3846 3939

Cairns _____ 4041 3061

Gold Coast _____ 5575 6966

Mackay _____ 4953 5071

Rockhampton _____ 4938 7720

Sunshine Coast _____ 5441 1222

Townsville _____ 4721 1384

PEP is available from:

- Specialist HIV Services:
AIDS Medical Unit, Brisbane.
Phone 3224 5526
- Sexual Health Clinics: A full list of Queensland services with contact numbers appears inside this brochure.
- Department of Emergency Medicine (Accident and Emergency) in major hospitals: Contact details are listed in the White Pages under 'Hospitals'.
- Your nearest GP HIV treatments prescriber:

Please stamp your clinic address and contact details below:

Do you think
you've just been
**exposed
to HIV?**