



HIV Prevention

Post-exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

Antiretroviral therapy not only helps people living with HIV, it also plays a role in preventing acquisition of the virus.

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) involves taking a short course of antiretroviral drugs, usually for a month, after a high-risk exposure. To be most effective, PEP should be started immediately after possible exposure, waiting no more than 72 hours.

Unlike pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), which is taken in advance of potential exposure, PEP requires a full combination antiretroviral regimen. The latest guidelines, last updated in 2016, recommend a 28-day course of raltegravir (Isentress) plus tenofovir disoproxil fumarate/emtricitabine (Truvada or generic equivalents).

If you suspect a high-risk exposure to HIV—for example, having condomless sex or sharing needles with an HIV-positive person who has an unsuppressed viral load—contact your health care provider or local hospital emergency room as soon as possible.

[Click here](#) for the POZ HIV Prevention Drug Chart for info on the available options for PEP.

Last Reviewed: March 28, 2024

© 2024 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<https://www.poz.com/basics/hiv-basics/postexposure-prophylaxis-pep>