

What is PEP?

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AIDS Committee of Toronto

PEP stands for:

Post Exposure Prophylaxis

- It is a regular dose of anti-viral medication to prevent the infection of HIV after an individual has been exposed.
- It is taken everyday for 4 weeks, to try and stop HIV before it fully takes hold of the body's immune system.

PEP - Does It Work?

- Must be taken/started within 72 hours of believed exposure.
- It is best if started within a 3 hour period of exposure.
- Evidence in health care workers, pregnant women, sexual assault victims, gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (MSM) and animal studies indicated that PEP decreased the risk of HIV infection.
- PEP is not 100% effective, but may prevent anywhere from 80% to 90% of infections.
- It has been pointed out that even if PEP failed to prevent HIV transmission, it could reduce the viral load and slow the progression of HIV in a person who becomes infected.

(S G Ralph, Consultant in GU Medicine; Consultant Physician *York District Hospital; The General Infirmary at Leeds, UK,*
R D Hardern 2001)

The Problems with PEP

- Side effects – 31.6 % of health care workers needed more than two weeks off work-how will this affect compliance?

(Parkin JM, Murphy M, Anderson J, et al. Tolerability and side-effects of post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV infection. *Lancet* 2002; 355:722-34)

- Possible development of a drug resistant virus if the treatment fails to stop HIV infection.
- Cost is between \$900-\$1400 (estimated). Your prescription drug plan *may* cover the cost.
- It may not work: the longer the wait, the greater the risk.
- It is not easy to come by in Toronto.

Accessing PEP

As of right now in Toronto:

- Hospitals generally have occupational PEP for exposures in a workplace context.

- Sexual assault units offer PEP to victims of sexual assault.

For those who Can Easily Access PEP

- PEP for healthcare workers and victims of sexual assault will receive the treatment at no cost.
- Those given the PEP treatment undergo an intensive follow-up (including counseling) to cope with side effects.

PEP and Pregnancy

- PEP is given pre-natally and post-natally to mothers and newborns of mothers who have been diagnosed with HIV.
- Many antiretroviral drugs can be damaging to the baby/fetus so it is important to go on the appropriate medications.