

UN System HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Program Frequently Asked Questions for Staff Members

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1. What is HIV PEP?

HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) is a 28-day course of HIV medications taken after a possible exposure to HIV to prevent HIV infection in the exposed individual. It should be started as soon as possible after exposure to be effective (1-2 hours ideally) and must always be started within 72 hours after exposure to HIV, or it will not work. HIV PEP should only be used in cases of emergencies.

2. What does the UN System's HIV PEP Kit contain?

The HIV PEP Kit consists of the following: **Anti-retroviral medications** (medication to prevent the transmission of HIV), **Emergency birth control** (medication to prevent pregnancy) and **pregnancy test kits**.

3. How soon can I start HIV PEP after exposure?

HIV PEP should be initiated as soon as possible after exposure, ideally within two hours or less, and no later than 72 hours post-exposure.

4. Will HIV PEP work after 72 hours of probable exposure to HIV?

No, the efficacy and effectiveness of HIV PEP is not guaranteed after more than 72 hours of exposure to HIV. It is therefore crucial to get HIV PEP within 72 hours of exposure.

5. What type of tests are required before I take HIV PEP?

Based on the attending physician's assessment, baseline tests may be requested, including an HIV test, pregnancy test, sexually transmitted infections (STI) screening, Hepatitis B & Hepatitis C test, liver, and kidney function tests, etc.

6. Is a pregnancy test required for all women before taking the HIV PEP kit?

It is important to know if you are pregnant before starting HIV PEP. A pregnancy test must be done if you do not know if you are pregnant.

7. Is HIV PEP safe?

The current preferred regimen is generally safe and well-tolerated. Patients usually experience only mild side effects from the preferred HIV PEP regimen. In almost all cases, the benefits of HIV prevention outweigh any other risks posed by the medication.

8. Can I take HIV PEP if I am already HIV positive?

No, if you are HIV-positive at the baseline test, HIV PEP is not appropriate and will not be prescribed. If started, it should be discontinued immediately. This is to prevent the development of resistance to medications that may be needed later to treat HIV infection. Those with HIV-positive results should seek medical attention for the treatment of HIV through normal medical channels or follow up with their physician.

9. Can I take PEP every time I have unprotected sex?

No. PEP should only be used in cases of emergencies. It is not intended to replace the regular use of other HIV prevention methods. If you feel that you might be exposed to HIV frequently, speak with a health care professional (UN clinic healthcare providers or a designated physician) about other safe sex methods and options that may be available to you.

10. Is HIV PEP an alternative to other prevention methods?

HIV PEP should not replace highly effective prevention methods, such as abstinence, barrier methods like condoms, safe injection practices by healthcare workers, etc. HIV PEP is meant to be used for emergencies only and should not be used as an ongoing HIV prevention strategy.

11. Can I use the kits for other purposes, like using the kits only for the pregnancy test or the “morning-after” pill?

No, the kit’s contents should be solely reserved for managing cases of probable exposure to HIV infection. You should reach out to your UN health facilities, UN clinic or designated physician who will be able to provide you with pregnancy tests or "morning-after pills" that can be used for other purposes other than the HIV PEP.

12. Who is eligible to receive UN HIV PEP?

All UN personnel as stipulated in the UN Security Management System and their recognized dependents are eligible, except IGOs/NGO staffs and family members. Please see: https://hr.un.org/sites/hr.un.org/files/PEP_SMOM%20Chapter%20Revision%20%28final%29_0_0.pdf.

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