

## Is PrEP for you?

PrEP can be helpful for some women, including cis and Trans women, 2-Spirit and Non-Binary people. There are many considerations that are unique to each person. For example, it could be considered by people who:

- Have an HIV+ partner
- Do not always use condoms
- Have multiple sex partners
- Do not know the HIV status of all sex partners
- Share drug use equipment
- Are trying to get pregnant with an HIV+ partner



It is important to make the decision about HIV prevention tools that is best for you. Read a range of resources to make sure you know everything you need to know to make the best decision possible for your well-being.

"I see it being valuable for women in abusive relationships who may not know the status of their sexual partner and don't have the autonomy to negotiate safer sex."

\* Note: Research has shown PrEP to be slightly less effective when used to prevent transmission related to sharing injection equipment. Talk to a health care professional for more information about your options.

## Is there coverage for PrEP?

- The Ontario Drug Benefit (ODB) program approved coverage for PrEP.
- This means that if you are collecting ODSP, OW, are enrolled in the Trillium Drug Program, or are over 65 years old, PrEP is now covered.
- ODB will also cover drug costs for who are 24 years old or younger who do not have private insurance as part of the OHIP+ program.
- PrEP is covered for First Nations and recognized Inuit people (with status) through the Federal Non-Insured Health Benefits Program.
- Some private insurance plans (i.e. coverage through a workplace or that you purchase on your own) may cover some or all of the cost of PrEP.
- PrEPStart is a program that provides 3 months of PrEP free for people who do not have a drug plan. It allows you to start PrEP right away and gives you 3 months to find the drug plan that is right for you. Find out more at [OntarioPrEP.ca/PrEPStart](https://ontarioprep.ca/prEPstart)
- If you do not have coverage through any of these means, PrEP is very expensive. It can cost between \$250 - \$1000 per month.
- If you have questions, or face barriers accessing PrEP, contact your local health care provider, AIDS Service Organization, or [OntarioPrEP.ca](https://ontarioprep.ca)

## How can you start PrEP?

- If you are considering PrEP as an option, ask a local HIV organization for support. They can refer you to a care provider who prescribes PrEP. To connect with your local HIV organization, see [whai.ca](https://whai.ca), or [OntarioPrEP.ca](https://ontarioprep.ca). You can also go to [wheretocatie.ca/contact](https://wheretocatie.ca/contact). There are options for both online and in person support, prescribing and care available across Ontario.
- Work to find a provider you are comfortable with so you can learn about whether PrEP is right for you.
- Be prepared to be tested for HIV before starting PrEP.

"When women want to get pregnant, they are still fearful even if they are undetectable in their blood. They are still worried they can transmit to their partner. I think if PrEP were available, it would be beneficial for those women."

"Sometimes women want to protect themselves, and sometimes they might want to protect their partner."

## What can you do?



### LEARN

Learn about PrEP for women. Visit [ontarioprep.ca](https://ontarioprep.ca) or [whai.ca](https://whai.ca) for the latest information and resources.



### TALK

Talk about PrEP with others. It is important for Cis and Trans women, 2-Spirit and Non-Binary people to be aware of PrEP as an option.



### CONNECT

You can learn more about PrEP by visiting [OntarioPrEP.ca](https://ontarioprep.ca) or [whai.ca/contact-us](https://whai.ca/contact-us)

"Women won't use PrEP if they don't know it exists."



# PrEP & Women

WHAT YOU  
NEED TO KNOW



2024

**WHA**I Women & HIV/AIDS Initiative

[WHA.I.CA](https://whai.ca)



## What is PrEP?

PrEP STANDS FOR

Pre Exposure Prophylaxis



- It is a drug that HIV-negative people can take to prevent HIV infection.
- PrEP is a way of protecting yourself if you're having sex with a person who is HIV+ or if their status is unknown.
- PrEP is taken before being exposed to HIV.
- PrEP is a generic drug (covered by the Ontario Drug Benefit) or Truvada, a brand name drug that has been used to treat HIV for more than a decade. DESCOVY(c) is another brand of PrEP; however, it is not approved for people assigned female at birth (or who have vaginal sex) because its effectiveness has not been studied. It has also not been studied for its prevention effectiveness for people who share drug injection equipment.



## Why is PrEP important for women?

- 1 There are more than 4,000 women in Ontario currently living with HIV<sup>1</sup>
- 2 Cis and Trans women, 2-Spirit and Non-Binary people continue to contract HIV
- 3 PrEP is effective at preventing HIV
- 4 It is important that these populations have options when choosing how to protect themselves from contracting HIV



### NOTE:

Statistically, some women are at higher risk for contracting HIV including women from African, Caribbean and Black communities, Indigenous women, Trans women and women who use drugs or who share drug use equipment. WHAI works with cis and Trans women, 2-Spirit and Non-Binary people. For more information on PrEP and gender affirming hormones, reach out to your local WHAI worker.

\* To read more about Descovy, see [www.descovy.com/understanding-hiv-risk](http://www.descovy.com/understanding-hiv-risk)

<sup>1</sup> Ontario HIV Epidemiology and Surveillance Initiative (OHESI). A Snapshot of HIV Diagnoses and the HIV Care Cascade among Women in Ontario, 2020. Toronto, On, March 9, 2022



## Is PrEP effective for women?

**90%+** Research has shown PrEP to be over 90% effective when taken consistently and correctly.



PrEP is most effective when taken every day.

**20 Days**

When starting PrEP, it needs to be taken for a minimum of 21 days to protect against HIV transmission in vaginal tissue and 7 days in rectal tissue. This means it takes longer to be effective for vaginal sex than anal sex.



PrEP does not prevent other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or pregnancy.



Using PrEP and condoms together offers even greater protection from HIV as well as STIs and pregnancy.



## Is PrEP safe?



PrEP is safe and has been approved by Health Canada.



Some people may experience side effects but they usually go away. Ask a health care professional about what to expect.



PrEP requires medical appointments every three months. At these appointments, you will be tested for HIV, check in with your health care provider about any side effects, and ensure you're doing okay while taking PrEP.



PrEP is safe to take during pregnancy, breastfeeding or chestfeeding. Talk to a health care professional for more information.



Hormone medication is safe to take while on PrEP (i.e. estrogen, testosterone blockers). For more information, visit [OntarioPrEP.ca](http://OntarioPrEP.ca) or [whai.ca](http://whai.ca)



## For more information



Contact your local Women & HIV/AIDS Initiative Coordinator.

Visit [whai.ca](http://whai.ca) for contact information.

**WHAI** Women & HIV/AIDS Initiative



### REFERENCES

Ontario HIV Treatment Network  
 Ontario HIV Epidemiology and Surveillance Initiative  
 CATIE: Canada's Source for HIV and Hepatitis C information  
 Patten S, Tan D, Luyombya H, Wilton J, Logie C, Kerr J, Tharao W, Ryan S (2016). ACB Service Provider Perceptions and Understanding of Biomedical Approaches to HIV Prevention.  
 All quotes sourced from (Patten et al., 2016)