

# Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) for HIV

Information and advice for patients

## *Occupational Health & Wellbeing*

Please read this information carefully before starting treatment, as the final decision on whether to have this treatment is yours. If you have any doubts or worries, or you are simply confused about something, ask your doctor.

### **What is Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)?**

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a treatment to reduce your chances of contracting HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) after your possible exposure to it. It involves taking the following tablets by mouth, as prescribed:

- Truvada (Tenofovir 245mg and Emtricitabine 200mg)
- Kaletra (Lopinavir 200mg and Ritonavir 50mg)
- Metoclopramide 10mg for nausea (feeling sick) if needed

You will be given 6 days supply of PEP by either occupational health, A&E or the sexual health (GUM) department after they have assessed the risks of your exposure. You will be told how to get a further prescription as you need to take the medication for up to 4 weeks. To reduce the risk of exposing others to HIV during sexual intercourse please also use a condom until further medical checks are completed.

### **What is the benefit of taking PEP?**

The benefit of taking PEP is that it can greatly reduce your risk of contracting HIV if it is taken soon after exposure to the virus. Although these tablets are not licensed specifically for preventing HIV, they are licensed to treat HIV.

### **What are the risks of PEP?**

These medicines can cause the following side-effects: Headaches, dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, tiredness, dizziness, tingling sensation, sleeplessness, cough, flu-like symptoms, general pain or skin reactions.

Less commonly, significant side-effects can occur after 4-6 weeks of treatment. Further information about possible side-effects can be found in the manufacturer's leaflet which comes with the medication.

There is not sufficient evidence about the effect of these medications during pregnancy so pregnant women may still be advised to take them if the benefits outweigh the possible risks. Women who are breastfeeding should stop breastfeeding while taking these medicines or if found to be HIV positive.

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### **What are the risks of not taking PEP?**

If you have had exposure to the HIV virus, there is a small risk that you may contract the virus. Taking PEP reduces this risk, so if you do not take PEP this risk is not reduced.

### **Are there any alternatives to PEP?**

There is no alternative treatment to prevent HIV but if you are unable to tolerate the medication a HIV specialist may be able to adjust it.

### **Before taking PEP**

Before you start taking PEP please tell the doctor if you:

- are taking any other medicines or vitamins
- have a history of liver disease, kidney disease, blood disorders (such as anaemia), allergies and if you have ever had a reaction to any medicines
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

Before you start treatment the doctor may ask to take a sample of your blood. You will then need to have further blood tests at regular intervals to monitor your blood and liver function. Your doctor will advise you how often you need these blood tests and how long for.

### **How to take the medication**

Please read the manufacturer's leaflet that comes with the medication before taking it for the first time. You should start this medication as soon as possible after exposure and take it for the next 4 weeks. Make sure you take the dose that has been prescribed.

#### **Truvada**

**Take one tablet daily with food.**

- If you miss a dose take 1 tablet as soon as possible. If a dose is missed and it is nearly time for your next dose, only take 1 tablet, do not double the dose.
- If you vomit less than 1 hour after taking Truvada, take another tablet. If you vomit after 1 hour of taking Truvada do not take another tablet.

#### **Kaletra**

**Take 2 tablets twice a daily, with or without food.**

- Do not chew, break or crush the tablets.
- If you miss a dose take 1 tablet as soon as possible. If a dose is missed and it is nearly time for your next dose, only take 1 tablet, do not double the dose.

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### **Metoclopramide**

**Take 1 tablet, 3 times per day for nausea if needed.**

- Do not drink alcohol while taking this medication.
- Women under the age of 20 should not take this medicine.

### **Storing the medication**

- Keep these medications out of the sight and reach of children.
- Store at room temperature.
- Do not use after the expiry date.
- Store them in the original packaging.
- Keep packaging tightly closed.
- Ask your pharmacist how to dispose of any medications.

### **Follow-up**

You will be told what follow-up blood tests and appointments you need whilst taking this medication. If you experience any unpleasant side effects from the medication please contact the department that provided you with the medication or your GP so the treatment can be re-assessed.

### **Further information**

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the department that provided you with this medication by contacting the hospital switchboard and asking for them, or alternatively speak to your GP or local pharmacist.

**Hospital switchboard:** 0121 554 3801

For information on HIV visit the Terence Higgins Trust website: [www.tht.org.uk](http://www.tht.org.uk)

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website:

**Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust**  
[www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk)

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### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Health Protection Agency, 'Eye of the needle', November 2008
- Department of Health, 'HIV post-exposure prophylaxis: Guidance from the UK Chief Medical Officers' Expert Advisory Group on AIDS', September 2008
- British National Formulary 62, section 5.3, 'Antiviral drugs', September 2011

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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