

## What is it?

People can become exposed to HIV in several ways. This may be from unprotected sex, sharing needles or having a needlestick injury. A needlestick injury is when an unclean needle pricks you, such as accidentally stepping on one.

If you think you may have been exposed to HIV, a medicine called Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) can reduce your risk of getting HIV. PEP prevents HIV from spreading through the body. PEP must be taken within 72 hours of the exposure to properly work.

PEP is a four-week course of medication. It's available from sexual health clinics and emergency departments.

## What will my GP do now?

If your GP thinks you may have been exposed to HIV, they will refer you for a specialist sexual health assessment so you can start your PEP course. If you can't take PEP, your GP will talk to you about the next steps and other treatment options.

Your GP will also:

- Arrange a blood test to confirm your diagnosis
- Talk to you about safe sex and safe injecting to prevent future exposures
- Help you understand what activities you should avoid right now, such as donating blood
- Offer referrals for local counselling or psychologist services if you are feeling distress

## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP may see you again in the next few days to follow up your test results, monitor your health and manage the next steps of your treatment.

Your GP may also schedule more appointments and tests during the next few months. This is because it can take one to three months for HIV to be detected in the body. Often, you need more than one test to confirm whether the PEP was successful and you don't have HIV.

Your GP may offer further referrals to a specialist support service or sexual health clinic.

## What can I do?

If you think you might have HIV, take precautions to protect yourself and others. This includes:

- Practising safe sex and safe needle use if you inject drugs
- Don't donate blood
- Ask your GP which healthcare workers you need to tell

Continue to follow your GP's instructions. Don't skip any appointments, and take any medication as instructed.

Try not to panic in the coming weeks – there's a good chance you won't get HIV if you are able to start PEP within 72 hours of your exposure. If you're feeling anxious, talk to your GP about a referral to speak to a counsellor or a psychologist.

## Taking Precautions

**If you think that you might have HIV, there are some steps you can take to protect yourself and others**



**Practise safe sex and always use a condom**



**If you inject drugs, use clean needles, avoid sharing needles and dispose of used needles safely**

**Don't donate blood**

# HIV Exposure

## What supports are available?

### Liverpool Sexual Health Clinic

The Liverpool Sexual Health Clinic offers PEP, private STI testing and diagnosis. As well as helping you with [contact tracing](#), staff can help you manage and cope with your diagnosis. You can either ask your GP to refer you or contact the clinic directly.

The clinic is located on the ground floor, 13 Elizabeth Street, Liverpool. They can be contacted on **9827 8022**.



## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- When should I start treatment?*
- When will I know if the PEP worked?*
- What if I test positive after PEP?*
- Where can I get further support?*
- Do I have to stop having sex?*
- Can I donate blood?*
- Do I need to see a specialist?*



## Where can I learn more?

If you'd like to learn more about HIV exposure, the following resources can help:

- **ASHM** – PEP after Non-Occupational and Occupational Exposure to HIV: [ashm.org.au](http://ashm.org.au)
- **ACON** – Access to PrEP – What You Need to Know: [acon.org.au](http://acon.org.au)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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