

Forensic Nursing Service

## Taking HIV PEP

### Human Immunodeficiency Virus Post-Exposure Prophylaxis

#### Risk of getting HIV

If you have been (or think you might have been) sexually assaulted, you might be concerned about your risk for getting HIV. We cannot know what the exact risk of HIV infection is after a sexual assault.

We do know that when someone has sex without a condom with someone who is known to have HIV, there is between a 0.01% and a 3.38% chance of getting HIV, depending on the type of sexual contact. This means there is a 96.6% - 99.9% chance of **not** getting HIV.

If you do not know the HIV status of the person who assaulted you, your risk is even lower.

These numbers tell us that the possibility of getting HIV from a sexual assault is very low.

#### Preventing HIV with medications

The HIV Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) treatment consists of three different anti-HIV medications usually used to treat people who already have HIV. They can help to prevent HIV infection in some cases.

This treatment is not recommended if:

- ✘ The risk of exposure to HIV is low.
- ✘ It has been more than 72 hours since exposure.

#### We might recommend HIV PEP if:

It has been less than 72 hour since exposure.

**and**

It is known that the person has HIV.

**and/or**

The person is a high risk of being HIV positive, such as someone who uses I.V. drugs or a man who has sex with men.

**and/or**

More than one person assaulted you.

**and/or**

You were assaulted in high risk location.

#### If we recommend HIV PEP

- You get a 5 day starter pack of medications.
- You will need to take a total of 28 days of medications.

#### Note:

You must see a family doctor or nurse practitioner in your community in the next 1 or 2 days to get 23 more days of medication.

You must take the yellow paper that came with the medication to your appointment. This paper has very important information for the doctor/nurse practitioner.

- You will have blood taken to test your liver and kidneys. The blood test is repeated at least 2 more times while you take the medications.
- You need to review how to correctly take the medications and learn the possible side effects.

### When taking HIV PEP

- Read the blue paper that comes with the HIV PEP starter packet. It has important information about the medications and explains how often to take each one.
- Take with food to reduce any possible upset stomach.
- Do not eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice while taking HIV PEP.

#### **Important:**

HIV PEP can interact with other medications and drugs.

Before you take **any** other medicines and drugs, check first with:

St. Paul's Hospital  
Outpatient Pharmacy                      1-888-511-6222

This includes before taking prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, inhalers, vitamins, herbal supplements, and street drugs.

#### **HIV PEP side effects**

Some people feel fine taking HIV PEP and other people feel sick. Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about any side effects.

The most common side effects are feeling tired all over (fatigue), headache, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

#### **Get medical help if you have:**

- numbness, tingling, burning or pain in your legs, hands or feet
- severe stomach pain, nausea, or vomiting
- skin rash
- fever (over 38.5°C or 101.3°F)
- mouth sores
- severe muscle aches and pains

#### **For women**

HIV PEP might stop estrogen-based birth control methods (such as the pill, patch, or ring) from working. Use a back-up method (such as condoms) or refrain from sex while you are taking HIV PEP and for 2 months after you finish taking HIV PEP.

#### **Protecting others**

For the next few months:

- Protect your sexual partners. Use a condom or refrain from having sex.
- Do not share tooth brushes, razors, needles or other personal items that might come in contact with your blood or body fluids.
- Do not donate blood, plasma, organs, tissue, or sperm.
- Try not to get pregnant. If you do get pregnant while taking HIV PEP, see your doctor or nurse practitioner right away.
- Try not to breast feed while taking HIV PEP. Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner about what is best for you and your child.

#### **HIV PEP Resources**

St. Paul's Hospital  
Outpatient Pharmacy                      1-888-511-6222

- To review medications you take.
- Ask general questions about HIV PEP.

Fraser Health  
Embrace Clinic                              1-855-775-7223

- Talk to a nurse practitioner.
- Get HIV PEP medications and see for follow-up monitoring and blood tests.