



Executive Producer's Commentary

Post Exposure Prophylaxis or PEP has been available for more than a decade, yet very few people understand what it is. PEP is an intervention that people can do to prevent HIV infection after a recent sexual or needlestick exposure. PEP involves taking a cocktail of medications called “antiretrovirals” daily for 28 days. These antiretrovirals are the same medications that we give to people who are already infected with HIV. But with PEP, these medications are given to HIV negative persons who have recently been exposed to HIV to prevent them from being infected in the first place.

Here's how it works. It takes about 5 days for HIV to work itself through our bodies and into our bloodstream. Once HIV enters into the bloodstream, a person is infected with HIV and nothing can be done to reverse this infection. PEP works by blocking HIV's ability to make copies of itself. By doing this, the HIV virus is contained and destroyed by the body before it has a chance to cause infection.

Studies suggest that PEP may be up to 80% effective in preventing HIV infection if it is taken correctly. In order for PEP to be most effective, it should be started as early as possible after someone experiences a potential exposure to HIV. Ideally, PEP should be started within 2 hours after the exposure and no later than 36 hours. The longer one waits to start PEP, the less likely it is to be effective in preventing HIV infection.

Examples of HIV exposures where PEP may be helpful include having sex with someone who is HIV+ and the condom breaks or sharing a needle or other equipment used to prepare drugs like water or bowls with someone who is HIV+.

Right now, male-to-male sex accounts for the largest number of new HIV infections in the US. Of all groups of men who have sex with men (MSM), HIV cases increased most in young MSM aged 13-24. Young, black MSM had the most dramatic increases. In fact, the number of new cases of HIV in young, black men increased 93% from 2001 to 2006. These numbers highlight the ongoing risk of HIV infection among young people and underscore the need to reach this group with effective HIV prevention services like PEP.

Watch this video and download the widget and share it with your friends. Talk to people about PEP. Which of your friends have heard about PEP. Remember that if you think you may have been exposed to HIV, there is something that you can do, but you need to act quickly. PEP is available and may prevent you from becoming infected.

For more information on when and how to take PEP, go to the PEP website, www.PEP411.com

PEP411.com

Antonio Urbina, MD

Asst Prof of Medicine, New York Medical College / Exec Producer, PEP411.com