



## Malawi EMPOWER Activity

USAID Expanding Malawi HIV/AIDS Prevention with Local Organizations Working for an Effective Epidemic Response  
(EMPOWER)

### PrEP MESSAGES

KNOW ABOUT HIV PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PrEP)



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THE SCIENCE OF IMPROVING LIVES

# KNOW ABOUT HIV PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PrEP)

## What is PrEP?

- PrEP is the use of anti-HIV medication that keeps HIV-negative people from getting HIV.

## How often do I need to take PrEP?

- You need to take it once a day at more or less the same time. You can take it within a few hours of your normal time - as long as you only take one pill a day.

## How should I take PrEP

- You take one PrEP pill once a day with or without food. It helps to take the pill at the same time each day so that you do not forget. If you forget to take the pill, take it as soon as you remember but do not take more than 1 pill in one day.
- PrEP means taking a pill every day and going for regular HIV testing, PrEP should be used with other HIV prevention methods. It is possible to take PrEP with or without food.

## What if I want to stop taking PrEP?

- If you decide PrEP is no longer useful, discuss stopping with a healthcare provider. You will get information for how long after you should continue to make sure you are properly protected.

## What do I need to know about PrEP?

- Important to have an HIV test every 3 months.
- PrEP does not cure HIV.
- PrEP is part of a combination approach to prevent HIV, so we

encourage you to use other safe sex practices such as using condoms and lubricants.

- Your pills are for you ONLY. Please do not share them with anyone else as this may harm their health and yours too.

## Where should I keep PrEP?

- PrEP should be kept in a cool dry place, away from children. Keep in a tightly closed container.

## How long does it take for PrEP to work?

- It takes up to **20 days** to be fully protected after taking PrEP pill every day. It is important to protect yourself by combining the method with other preventive methods like use of condom at this time.

## How long does it take for PrEP to stop working?

- It works for about a week after stopping taking medication daily, but it is important to protect oneself from HIV with other HIV prevention measures immediately after you stop taking PrEP.

## Where can I get PrEP services?

- You can get services on PrEP from two mission hospitals in Zomba, St Lukes and Pirititi where there is PrEP implementation is being done.
- You will also find other services like on sexually transmitted infections and family planning.

## What are the side effects?

- Some people get mild side effects when they start PrEP.

- Most go away after a few weeks once your body gets used to the medicine.
- The most common side effects are:
  - Nausea, Headache
  - Tiredness, Diarrhoea,
  - Depression Abnormal Dreams Vomiting Rash Problems Sleeping Changes in appetite.
- If you experience any unusual effects or don't feel well when taking PrEP, let your healthcare provider know as soon as possible.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you are taking any other medication/herbs/ vitamins because this might affect how the PrEP works or how the other medication works.

### **If I take PrEP, does this mean I have to take it for the rest of my life?**

- No. It is important that you take PrEP daily while at risk of getting HIV, but when you feel that you are no longer at risk you can talk to your healthcare provider about stopping PrEP. You have a chance to take the drug for not less than a year if you join the study and you are still at risk.

### **Can I take PrEP for one night only?**

- No. You need to take the pill once a day for at least 20 days before you are fully protected.

### **What happens if I miss a pill?**

- If you missed a pill, take it as soon as you remember, and continue to take it every day just like before.

### **PrEP Does Not:**

- Prevent other STIs
- Prevent pregnancy
- Protect you from HIV after exposure, PrEP reduces your risk before exposure.

### **If I take PrEP, can I stop using condoms when I have sex?**

- Using condoms is still the best way to prevent HIV infection. Condoms protect against STIs and pregnancy when used correctly and consistently.
- PrEP is an extra HIV prevention option and where possible, should be used in combination with other prevention methods:
  - Condoms
  - PrEP
  - Counselling
  - Post-exposure prophylaxis
  - Healthy lifestyles
  - Treatment for STIs
  - ART for partners living with HIV.