# U.S. Revises Guidelines for Occupational HIV Exposure

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The U.S. Public Health Service has revised its guidelines for occupational exposure to HIV, recommending an immediate four weeks of post-exposure prophylaxis with three antiretrovirals (ARVs), MedPage Today reports. The guidelines altered the 2005 recommendations, which advised a risk assessment before deciding upon a two- or three-drug course of ARVs. These new guidelines take into account recent improvements in ARV tolerability.

Occupational exposure to HIV, which encompasses such risk factors as needlesticks and cuts coming into contact with infected body fluids, leads to infection in about 0.3 percent of cases.

The revised guidelines also state that the six-month follow-up period can be reduced to four months if newer, more sensitive HIV tests are used. Called fourth-generation assays, these tests can detect both HIV antibodies and the HIV p24 antigen, making the tests more reliable than older tests that only looked for antibodies, and giving them the capacity to detect presence of the virus earlier.

A separate set of guidelines applies to post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) in cases of non-occupational exposure, such as unprotected sex.

To read the updated U.S. guidelines, click here.

To read the MedPage Today story, click here.

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