



Prevention: PEP-in-Pocket

PEP involves taking a monthlong course of antiretrovirals after HIV exposure.

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Having antiretrovirals on hand for post-exposure prophylaxis after potential HIV exposure—an approach called PEP-in-pocket—is a feasible prevention option, especially for people who have sex infrequently. PEP involves taking a monthlong course of antiretrovirals after exposure. It should be started as soon as possible, and definitely within 72 hours. PEP is typically provided on an emergency basis, but this can be difficult if, for example, a condom breaks on vacation or a person lives in a rural area or lacks transportation. Researchers evaluated PEP-in-pocket at two HIV clinics in Toronto. After counseling, individuals with infrequent but high-risk exposures were prescribed a course of antiretrovirals to keep on hand. Among 112 people prescribed PEP, 35 self-initiated antiretrovirals after sexual exposure, including 19 who did so more than once, for a total of 69 courses. No one acquired HIV. However, there were 22 cases of sexually transmitted infections, suggesting that some recipients might also be candidates for doxycycline post-exposure prophylaxis (doxyPEP).

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