



Clinical Education Initiative  
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# HIV PREVENTION WITH PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS: A PRIMER FOR PHARMACISTS

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## **HIV Prevention with Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis: A Primer for Pharmacists [video transcript]**

00:00:24

- Hello, I'm Dr. Susan Lee, Specialist Clinical Pharmacist at Northwell Health. Thank you for viewing the New York State Clinical Education Initiative video on the critical role of the pharmacist and Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis or PrEP, to prevent the transmission of HIV. The information in this video is based on New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute Guidance for PrEP along with other best practices for pharmacists.

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In this video we will start by providing a brief overview of the current state of HIV in the U.S. and in New York. We will then provide information on PrEP including what it is and the evidence for its efficacy. We will then look at an example showing how pharmacists can identify potential PrEP candidates and educate patients who have been prescribed PrEP. We will close with a list of resources for pharmacists.

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There are over a million people living with HIV in the U.S. In New York State, approximately 123,000 people are living with HIV though only 92% know their status. Of these, about 2/3 are in care and have achieved viral suppression through the standard of care. Combination antiretroviral therapy, with usually at least three medications from different pharmacologic classes, are used to treat HIV.

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Pharmacists play a key role by encouraging people to get tested regularly and help people to maintain adherence to their antiretroviral medications. Over 50,000 people are diagnosed with HIV each year in the United States, and almost 3,000 of them live in New York State. Pharmacists have a responsibility in preventing the spread of HIV by supporting risk reduction efforts such as PrEP.

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The New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute, recommends the use of Truvada, tenofovir disoproxil fumarate and emtricitabine fixed dose combination tablet as HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis. This recommendation is based on research evidence and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Currently, Truvada is the only FDA approved drug for PrEP.

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Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, or PrEP, involves the use of antiretroviral medication by HIV negative individuals to reduce the risk of acquiring HIV. PrEP is different from nPEP, or Non-Occupational Post-Exposure Prophylaxis, which is the use of antiretrovirals to prevent HIV infection after a single high-risk event such as unprotected sex, injection drug use or other non-occupational exposures to HIV. PrEP is not meant to be used as a lifelong intervention, but rather as a method of increasing prevention during periods when people are at greatest risk for acquiring HIV. There are many potential candidates for PrEP, including men who have sex with men, individuals in serodiscordant relationships, transgender

individuals, individuals who engage in transactional sex or injection drug use and individuals who have used multiple courses of nPEP. This list is by no means comprehensive and there are many other considerations when weighing the decision to offer PrEP. For additional potential candidates, please see the PDF accompanying this video titled, "Potential Candidates for PrEP".

00:04:14

There are three major criteria for determining whether a patient is an appropriate candidate for PrEP. First, the patient must have a recent documented negative HIV test result. The negative HIV test result needs to be confirmed as close to initiation of PrEP as possible. Ideally, on the same day the prescription is given. Second, the patient should be at high risk for contracting HIV either through sexual contact, such as vaginal or anal sex without a condom, or through sharing needles or syringes, especially if the patient is engaging in unprotected sex or needle-sharing with multiple people or people who are HIV positive or whose HIV status is unknown. Third, the patient should express a willingness and ability to fully adhere to the PrEP regimen.

00:05:16

Pharmacists are critical in promoting the adoption of PrEP among their patients. We will now review an example, demonstrating how a pharmacist can identify potential candidates for PrEP.

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Meet Sarah. Sarah is a 25 year old transgender woman who comes to the pharmacy regularly to get her hormone therapy refills. She has come in today to fill a new prescription.

00:05:39

- Hey, Sarah. How are you today?

00:05:41

- I'm great, Reuben. How are you doing today?

00:05:43

- I'm well. What can I do for you today?

00:05:45

- I'm picking up my prescription.

00:05:46

- Okay.

(keyboard clicking)

We should have this ready for you in about 1/2 an hour. How does that sound?

00:05:52

- [Sarah] Fantastic. Thank you.

00:05:54

- [Reuben] Do you have any questions I can answer while you're waiting?

00:05:57

- Well, I was wondering, are there any interactions when you're taking this and my hormones together?

00:06:01

- That's a great question.

(keyboard clicking)

From what I can see, you should be able to use this medication even on hormones without any bad interactions.

00:06:11

- Okay, great. Thanks.

00:06:14

- No problem. Actually, you know what? I was wondering if I could ask you a question.

00:06:17

- Sure, what is it?

00:06:18

- I notice that you're someone who takes her health very seriously, so I was wondering if you've ever heard of PrEP or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis?

00:06:26

- Um, no, I don't think so.

00:06:28

- [Reuben] PrEP is a drug that you can take every day to help protect yourself from contracting HIV.

00:06:33

- Okay, sounds interesting. How would I go about getting PrEP?

00:06:36

- Well, you would need to speak to your medical provider about that or I could help you find one that prescribes PrEP if it's something you're interested in pursuing.

00:06:44

- [Sarah] And what would they do?

00:06:45

- They would talk to you to make sure that PrEP is a good fit and answer your questions. They would also do some lab tests to make sure that you are HIV negative and that you're healthy enough to take the medication. PrEP prevents people from getting HIV so we would need to make sure that you are HIV negative before you start taking the medication.

00:07:02

- Are there a lot of side effects to PrEP?

00:07:04

- There might be some side effects, like a headache or gas, but they tend to go away after a few weeks. I mean, the medication is generally well tolerated.

00:07:13

- Hmm. Now is PrEP expensive?

00:07:17

- It can be but most insurance plans, including New York State Medicaid, cover PrEP. There are also other programs that can help for those who qualify. One that I'm aware of is the New York State PrEP Assistance Program.

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- Okay, great. I might be interested. What do I do next?

00:07:32

- First things first, you would need to speak to a medical provider who prescribes PrEP or I could help you find a PrEP provider by using the New York State PrEP Provider Directory while you wait for your prescription.

00:07:41

- Okay, great. Thanks.

00:07:43

- Okay. (keyboard clicking)

00:07:45

- As you can see in this example, pharmacists play an important role in helping patients access PrEP. Pharmacists can start by assessing whether their patients are potential candidates. When engaging

patients who are good potential candidates, pharmacists can educate patients on PrEP and answer their questions, allaying any misconception that might act as barriers to access. Finally, pharmacists can support their patients by connecting them to resources such as medical providers who prescribe PrEP and patient assistance programs. Once patients are prescribed PrEP, pharmacists can support adherence and follow-up.

00:08:26

Let's revisit Sarah, who followed Reuben's advice and saw her provider who determined she was a good candidate for PrEP. She was tested and found to be HIV negative and she was prescribed PrEP. Let's see how Reuben supports Sarah in dispensing PrEP and answering her questions about the medication.

00:08:51

- Hey, Reuben. How are you doing today?

00:08:52

- Hey, Sarah. How are you?

00:08:54

- I'm great. I actually took your advice and talked to my doctor about PrEP. I'm here to pick up my prescription now.

00:08:58

- Oh, that's great, Sarah. I'm really glad to hear that you're protecting yourself against HIV.

00:09:02

- Me too, I'm excited but also a little concerned.

00:09:05

- [Reuben] What are your concerns?

00:09:07

- Well, (sighs) I didn't feel comfortable asking the doctor but she told me that PrEP could affect my kidneys and I'm wondering if I need to be concerned especially because I'm already taking hormones daily.

00:09:16

- That's an understandable concern. I don't think you need to be too worried. There's no evidence of any interaction between PrEP and hormones also your doctor should be running blood tests regularly on your kidneys to catch any signs of damage before it's serious.

00:09:30

- Well that does make me feel a little better.

00:09:32

- What other questions or concerns do you have?

00:09:34

- None, really. The doctor just stressed how important it is for me to take this medication every day so I just wanna make sure I'm doing it right.

00:09:41

- It is important and you know what? Good for you for taking this seriously. Do you take a daily multivitamin?

00:09:46

- [Sarah] Mhm.

00:09:47

- Alright, so what's your strategy for taking those?

00:09:49

- Well, I keep it on my bedside table and when I turn my lamp off at night, it's sitting right there to remind me.

00:09:54

- That's a good idea. How well would that work for PrEP?

00:09:57

- I suppose it could work okay.

00:09:59

- Okay, great. Are there any times when you have trouble remembering to take your multivitamin?

00:10:04

- [Sarah] Well, sometimes I forget when I'm staying over at a friend's house or when I'm on vacation.

00:10:08

- How do you think you could overcome this challenge?

00:10:10

- Well, I always remember to put them in my purse when I'm going away from my apartment. The only issue is remembering to take them when my routine is interrupted.

00:10:17

- [ Reuben] Can you set an alarm on your smartphone?

00:10:20

- I never thought about that. I suppose that could work.

00:10:22

- Yeah, I would recommend setting one an hour after your wake up alarm, so you don't confuse the two. Some smartphones actually allow you to name your alarms.

00:10:31

- Thank you so much. I really feel like now I have a plan to take PrEP every day. I'm gonna go set up my alarm reminders while I wait.

00:10:36

- Excellent. We should have this ready for you shortly.

00:10:40

- This exchange shows a pharmacist can support patients by answering their questions about PrEP. The pharmacist starts the conversation by assessing Sarah's concern about adherence to PrEP then moves on to answer her questions, counseling her on how she can remain adherent to the medication and connecting her to resources that might be useful. It is important to note that pharmacists can provide ongoing support to patients on PrEP in this way, assessing their concerns, answering their questions, and supporting their adherence through counseling and connecting them to resources.

00:11:19

In summary, pharmacists are critical to the HIV prevention efforts and supporting access to PrEP. Pharmacists should keep in mind that PrEP is recommended for anyone at high risk of contracting HIV, including, men who have sex with men, transgender individuals, injection drug users, sex workers and serodiscordant couples, especially those attempting to conceive. Anyone being considered for PrEP must have a documented negative HIV test. Supporting adherence to PrEP is essential in maintaining its efficacy and preventing the transmission of HIV in uninfected individuals.

00:12:09

There are multiple resources on PrEP available for pharmacists. The New York State Department of Health AIDS Institute Guidance on the use of PrEP to prevent HIV transmission, can be found on [hivguidelines.org](http://hivguidelines.org). Other HIV resources for pharmacists can be found at this website as well. There are resources available specifically about the use of Truvada for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, including risk evaluation, a mitigation strategy material, and the Truvada package insert. The NIH AIDS info drug database, found at [aidsinfo.nih.gov](http://aidsinfo.nih.gov), also has information about Truvada. The AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition has material related to PrEP. In addition, PrEP Watch is a clearing house for information about



PrEP for HIV prevention. You can access the New York State PrEP/PEP Provider Voluntary Directory to find a healthcare provider who prescribes PrEP as well as PEP. Prepforsex.org is another resource that provides educational videos that pharmacists may use in waiting areas and other patient education materials. Lastly, you can call CEI Line at 1-866-637-2342, to speak with the clinician experienced in PrEP.

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Thank you for your interest in PrEP for HIV prevention. The information in this video will be useful as you assist your patients to access and take PrEP safely and effectively. Supporting the implementation of PrEP for HIV prevention, helps us move closer to the governor's vision of ending AIDS in New York State by the year 2020. For information on free training opportunities about PrEP, please visit [ceitraining.org](http://ceitraining.org).

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