

HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

A Guide for Sexual Assault Advocates & Survivors

HIV

HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, attacks the body's immune system and if left undiagnosed and untreated can lead to illness and death. HIV is transmitted through 5 body fluids: blood, semen, vaginal fluids, rectal fluids, and breast milk. People living with HIV who stay on treatment can live long, full lives.

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) means taking medicines after you may have been exposed to HIV to prevent becoming infected. PEP must be started within 72 hours (three days) after you may have been exposed to HIV. But the sooner PEP is started, the better. **Every hour counts!** If a health care provider prescribes PEP, it needs to be taken once or twice daily for 28 days.

PEP Following a Sexual Assault

When a survivor goes to the emergency department for a medical forensic exam, they will be offered prophylaxis for gonorrhea, chlamydia, and HIV. The forensic nurse and physician will evaluate whether there is enough known risk to give HIV PEP. PEP offered at a forensic exam is free – but only the first 3 to 5 days are given and a written prescription for the rest of the 28-day treatment.

If a survivor wants treatment for possible exposure to gonorrhea, chlamydia, and HIV, but doesn't want a forensic exam with collection of evidence at an emergency department, they can go to their primary care physician, Maine Family Planning (MFP), or Planned Parenthood (PPNNE). MFP and PPNNE have clinics throughout the state and they offer sliding scale options for appointments. **Note: that while MFP/PPNNE can offer an affordable appointment and provide a written prescription, they do not carry PEP and cannot offer it for free.**

Informed Decision Making

Likelihood of Contracting HIV

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates the likelihood of contracting HIV from a known positive person through consensual vaginal intercourse at 0.1%–0.2%, and through consensual receptive anal intercourse at 0.5%–3%. The threat of HIV transmission is greater in non-consensual penetration, or sexual assault, due to potential injuries sustained by the victim that are open and bleeding providing entry of the virus into the bloodstream. This is especially true for child victims who may suffer repeated abuse and more severe genital and anal or rectal injuries.

Potential Side Effects of PEP

Gastrointestinal intolerance, fatigue, malaise, skin reactions, myalgia, headaches, insomnia, nephrolithiasis, hepatotoxicity, and bone marrow suppression.

Cost

The cost of a typical 4-week course of PEP is \$800 to \$1,600, not including the costs of laboratory testing and medical follow up.

Paying for PEP

If a survivor receives a medical forensic examination in the emergency room after an assault, a 3–5 day starter pack will be included at no additional charge to the survivor. A prescription will be given for the rest of the treatment. Because a 3–5 day starter pack is available, the survivor should have time to connect with an advocate and make plans for how to pay for the rest of the prescription.

Medicaid

PEP is covered.

Private Insurance

PEP coverage is based on your insurance plan. Co-payment assistance may be available from PEP manufacturers (see **Gilead Co-payment Assistance** below) or Victims' Compensation.

Insured, but does not use insurance

Someone may decline to provide insurance information if they believe provision of that information would interfere with their personal privacy or safety. See **No Insurance** for next steps.

No Insurance

- Gilead Patient Assistance can cover the med Truvada (see **Using Gilead Patient Assistance** below).
- Individual Hospital Payment Assistance Programs – follow up with the SAFE nurse about assistance programs offered by their hospital.
- Local Pharmacies – reach out to find out which of your community pharmacies might cover a prescription.
- Apothecary By Design in Portland has been known to work with survivors in Southern Maine and is willing to ship statewide – call 207-899-0939 with questions.

We recommend calling local pharmacies to find who has PEP Truvada stocked and if they would be willing to work with you if you had a client in need of PEP as soon as possible.

Victims' Compensation

The Maine Victims' Compensation Program covers the costs of all medical forensic exams done in emergency rooms following a sexual assault. That includes the 3–5 day starter pack.

The survivor can then seek reimbursement from Victims' Compensation for the rest of the treatment if they have reported the crime to police and are cooperating with the investigation. However, as with all Victims' Compensation claims the remaining medication must be paid for up front by the victim (or billed to the patient's insurance) and then the survivor can request reimbursement.

Using Gilead Patient Assistance

Note: Gilead Patient Assistance will run the survivor's name through their insurance finder. If a survivor has insurance, Gilead can only offer the Co-payment Assistance Program; they cannot cover the full prescription cost. Even if the survivor believes using their insurance would interfere with their personal privacy or safety, Gilead has no exceptions to the policy.

Step 1

Fax a letter of medical necessity to 1-800-216-6857. You can find the letter of medical necessity form here: https://services.gileadhiv.com/content/pdf/gilead_enrollment_form.pdf

The form will ask the survivor for:

- Household income: **must be less than 500% FPL based on household size.**
- Indicate prescribing provider's name - this will expedite processing.
- Medical provider's address, phone number, National Provider Identification #, and signature.*
- Patient's name, date of birth, address, and phone number.
- Therapy ordered/prescribed.
- Date of exposure.
- If patient has already started therapy, date therapy started.
- If patient resides in US.
- Household size.
- Patient consent.
- *If you have a prescription written out, you do not need an additional physician's signature, but you do need to fax the prescription to Gilead with the application.

Step 2

Then the survivor or the advocate (with a release from the survivor) need to call 1-800-226-2056 and notifies Gilead that you have a person who needs PEP. Tell them you faxed in a letter of medical necessity (#1 above).

- Give them time of fax.
- Number of pages.
- Your fax number.
- Will take 5-10 minutes.
- Hours: Monday - Friday 9am-8pm EST.

Step 3

Gilead Assistance will give you a voucher number to place on the prescription. The survivor may go to the pharmacy to have the prescription filled with no out-of-pocket expenses. We recommend you call the pharmacy to be sure they have PEP Truvada stocked before going to pick up the prescription.

Gilead Co-payment Assistance

If you or someone you are working with has commercial (non Medicaid/MaineCare) insurance, PEP manufacturers may be able to cover co-pays and deductibles. The survivor is given an authorization number to present with the prescription and other insurance at the pharmacy.

- Gilead - 1-877-505-6986 Hours: Monday - Friday 8am- 8pm EST
<https://www.gileadadvancingaccess.com/copay-coupon-card>
- Merck - 1-855-834-3467 or www.isentress.com
- ViiV Healthcare - 1-866-747-1170 or <http://www.mysupportcard.com/>

Follow up testing

Whether HIV PEP is used or not, it is strongly recommended the patient have HIV testing at baseline, with follow up testing at 3 months, and 6 months from the time of assault .

Health Equity Alliance, Maine Family Planning, and Planned Parenthood are available in most of the state and offer free and/or sliding scale HIV and STD testing but not treatment for HIV.

Their contact information can be found at the following links:

- Maine Family Planning - <http://www.mainefamilyplanning.org>
- Maine Health Equity Alliance - <https://www.mainehealthequity.org>
- Planned Parenthood - <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-center/me>