

HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Available for Free to Patients at High Risk of HIV Infection

Pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, is a highly-effective method of HIV prevention for patients at substantial risk of acquiring HIV. Until now, the cost of the medication has been a barrier for many patients who could benefit. We are pleased to inform you that as of January 1st, 2018, the medication is now available at no cost to patients through the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE). When taken consistently, PrEP has been shown to reduce the risk of HIV infection in people who are at high risk by up to 92%.

Patients on PrEP take a daily antiretroviral medication (tenofovir and emtricitabine), and require regular monitoring of renal function, HIV status and testing for sexually transmitted infections. Complete clinical guidance for eligibility and management are available in the [BC-CfE guidelines](http://www.cfenet.ubc.ca/hiv-pre-exposure-prophylaxis-prep) (<http://www.cfenet.ubc.ca/hiv-pre-exposure-prophylaxis-prep>) or by calling the BC-CfE HIV Drug Treatment Program office at 604-806-8515.

Individuals are eligible for PrEP if they have current MSP coverage and meet the following criteria:

- Recently documented negative HIV test result (4th generation antibody testing within the previous 15 days)
- Normal renal function (eGFR > 60 mL/min)
- Documented Hepatitis B surface antigen status (whether negative or positive)
- Considered to be at high risk of acquiring HIV infection, which is broadly defined as follows:
 - Individuals engaging in an ongoing relationship involving unprotected sex with an HIV-positive partner who is not on stable antiretroviral treatment or virally suppressed (*Men who have sex with men (MSM) and Transgender women (TGW) may also qualify under additional eligibility criteria as outlined in the guidelines.*)
 - Individuals who share injection equipment with those who are HIV-positive and not on stable antiretroviral treatment or virally suppressed.

Any BC physician may now enrol new participants in the PrEP Program by completing the [BC-CfE's PrEP Enrolment & Prescription Request Form](#). PrEP medication is dispensed centrally at St. Paul's Hospital Ambulatory Pharmacy. For patients outside the Greater Vancouver area, PrEP medication can be delivered to the prescriber's office. Initial prescriptions provide a 30 day supply of medication, while repeat prescriptions may be extended up to 90 days, to coincide with follow-up testing recommendations.

Support for physicians prescribing PrEP is available from:

- BC-CfE HIV PrEP program and guidelines at <http://cfenet.ubc.ca/hiv-pre-exposure-prophylaxis-prep>
- BC-CfE HIV Drug Treatment Program office at 604-806-8515
- St. Paul's Hospital Pharmacy (Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm): 1-800-547-3622
- Physicians with expertise in PrEP prescribing through the REACH and RACE lines:
 - REACH Line (available 24/7): 604-681-5748 or 1-800-665-7677
 - RACE Line (available Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm): 604-696-2131 or 1-877-696-2131

Influenza Season Update

Recent influenza surveillance indicates that we are past the peak of influenza season. However, influenza activity remains above seasonal levels. This year has been unusual with the early appearance and high proportion of influenza B infections (48% of cases); while influenza AH3N2 comprised 40% of cases. Data from the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#) indicate that this year's vaccine provides moderately good protection against influenza B at 43% effectiveness. For influenza A, vaccine effectiveness was reported to be 25% for H3N2 and 67% for H1N1.

Influenza vaccine remains our best protection against the flu. Even when vaccine effectiveness is moderate, immunization reduces the incidence, transmission, and the severity of influenza impact in our communities. Please continue to promote annual immunization to all eligible patients, particularly to those at highest risk, such as seniors, long-term care residents, pregnant women, and children aged 6 months and older. For children receiving their first influenza immunization, please encourage the completion of both doses. See the full list of eligible groups for influenza vaccine at the [BCCDC website](#).

**You can reach a Medical Health Officer in Vancouver at 604.675.3900 Toll free at 1.855.675.3900
For public health emergencies after hours contact the Medical Health Officer on call at 604.527.4893**

**Vancouver Medical Health Officers
Dr. Patricia Daly (Chief Medical Health Officer)
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To receive Physicians' Updates by email please contact us at: vchregistrationcdc@vch.ca