Do you think you’ve just been exposed to HIV?

Information and assistance

Specialist HIV Service
Brisbane Sexual Health & HIV Service .................. 3837 5611

Sexual Health Clinics
Brisbane City ............................................. 3837 5611
Princess Alexandra ...................................... 3176 5881
Bundaberg .................................................... 4150 2754
Cairns .......................................................... 4226 4769
Gold Coast ................................................... 5576 9033
Ipswich .......................................................... 3817 2428
Logan ............................................................. 3240 5881
Mackay .......................................................... 4968 3919
Mt Isa .............................................................. 4744 4805
Palm Island .................................................... 4752 5100
Redcliffe/Caboolture ...................................... 3897 6300
Rockhampton ............................................... 4920 5555
Sunshine Coast ............................................. 5470 5244
Thursday Island .......................................... 4069 0413
Toowoomba ................................................... 4616 6446
Townsville .................................................... 4778 9600

Infectious Diseases Units
Royal Brisbane & Women’s Hospital ................. 3636 8111
Princess Alexandra Hospital ........................ 3240 2111
Mater Hospital ............................................. 3163 8111
Cairns Base Hospital .................................... 4050 6333
Gold Coast Hospital ..................................... 5519 8211
Nambour Hospital ........................................ 5470 6600
Townsville Hospital ..................................... 4796 1111

Queensland Positive People
Statewide ...................................................... 1800 636 241
Brisbane ....................................................... 3013 5555

PEP is available from
• Specialist HIV Service:
  Brisbane Sexual Health & HIV Service, Brisbane
  Phone 3837 5611.
• Sexual Health Clinics:
  A full list of Queensland services with contact numbers appears inside this brochure.
• Departments of Emergency Medicine (Accident and Emergency) in major hospitals: Contact details are listed in the White Pages under ‘hospitals’, or by phoning 13 HEALTH.
• Your nearest GP HIV treatments prescriber.

13 HEALTH
13 HEALTH (13 43 75 84) is a confidential service providing information and advice. It is not a diagnostic service and should not replace a medical consultation. After suspected exposure to HIV, 13 HEALTH can provide the telephone number for the nearest Hospital Emergency Department or Sexual Health Clinic, but cannot transfer you directly. For people in distress, 13 HEALTH nurses can discuss PEP and the procedures involved when presenting at health services. 13 HEALTH is a 24 hour, seven days a week service for the cost of a local call.

Queensland Health website
The Queensland Health website offers information for the general public on a range of sexual health issues.

Queensland Health sexual health website for young people:
www.istaysafe.com

For more copies of this pamphlet contact:
Communicable Diseases Branch
Queensland Health
Herston QLD 4006
Phone 3328 9724

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What is PEP?

PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) is a treatment that may prevent HIV transmission and is available to persons likely to have been exposed to HIV within the past 72 hours. It is a combination of anti-HIV drugs that must be taken exactly as prescribed at very specific times over a four-week period. These are powerful drugs that can cause side effects and may have a toxic effect on the liver. Many people report they experience some discomfort including, abdominal pain, diarrhoea or headaches throughout the four weeks. Sticking to the strict medication routine however is essential to give the drugs a chance to work effectively.

When to use PEP?

It is extremely important that a person, who is likely to have been exposed to HIV through contact with blood or body fluids from a person living with HIV, seeks treatment as soon as possible. PEP is most effective when taken as soon as possible after exposure to HIV.

Where to get PEP?

PEP must be prescribed by a doctor and is available from the clinics listed in this brochure. The standard prescription drug co-payment will be charged by the pharmacy dispensing the drugs. Anyone wishing to access PEP should telephone one of these services for opening hours, advise them that PEP may be required and make an appointment if necessary. People shouldn’t feel anxious about discussing PEP with the trained clinical staff at these services.

A follow-up appointment with the doctor who prescribed PEP is essential after completion of the course of drugs or if the course of drugs is interrupted or prematurely terminated.

What to say

Anyone who thinks that they have been exposed to HIV should call the nearest Sexual Health Clinic, GP HIV Prescriber or Hospital Emergency Department. Some services such as Sexual Health Clinics operate within limited hours and are closed on weekends and evenings. When presenting, the person should tell the health worker that exposure to HIV may have occurred and access to PEP may be required. They will be asked for information regarding risky behaviours and how exposure to HIV may have occurred. All discussions remain confidential so responses should be honest and frank.

Transmission

HIV may be transmitted when blood, semen or vaginal fluid from an infected person enters the body of an uninfected person. This can happen through:

- unsafe sex – rectal, oral and vaginal
- sharing needles and injecting equipment contaminated with blood.

HIV may also be transmitted through donated blood and blood products. However all blood, organs, tissues and semen donated in Australia are screened for HIV. The risk of getting HIV from these products in Australia is very low. Donating blood or body parts does not put you at risk of HIV infection.

Preventing HIV infection

- Everyone has a responsibility to protect themselves and their partners from contracting HIV. Safe sex and safe injecting practices remain the best ways to prevent HIV infection. This involves using condoms with water-based lubricant and always using sterile injecting equipment.
- PEP is not a guarantee that HIV infection will be prevented.
- PEP will not make people immune to future HIV exposures. People still need to practise safe sex and use safe injecting practices to prevent HIV infection. If you are exposed to HIV again in the future you should seek medical assistance to access PEP again.

It is still important to use condoms

- Condoms remain the best prevention against HIV infection.
- Condoms don’t make you ill with nasty side effects.
- Condoms are easy to access and carry with you.

‘Exposure to HIV can occur through unprotected intercourse (including condom breakage) or sharing needles and injecting equipment with a person with HIV infection.’

A treatment that may prevent people who have been exposed to HIV in the last 72 hours from becoming infected.