

# How to access PrEP in Nova Scotia

## What is Pre Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)?

The Halifax Sexual Health Clinic describes PrEP as a medication generally used by those who participate in condomless sexual contact with an HIV-positive partner or those who participate in condomless sexual contact with multiple partners who have an unknown sexual history or status. In Nova Scotia, this drug is called Truvada. Consistent and correct usage of PrEP reduces the user's risk of getting HIV from sexual contact by 92-99%. PrEP is NOT an effective prevention strategy for any other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Barriers such as condoms are recommended to lower the risk of contracting other sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection (STBBIs). PrEP is a daily medication, and individuals taking PrEP must have regular visits with a healthcare provider, once 30 days after starting PrEP and then every three months afterwards, to test for STBBIs and monitor for potential side effects.

## Who is PrEP for?

According to the Halifax Sexual Health Clinic, PrEP is recommended for:

- Men and transgender women who have condomless anal sex with men.
- Those who are HIV-negative with a HIV-positive partner and participate in condomless vaginal or anal sex.
- Those who participate in and share intravenous drug paraphernalia (needles).

PrEP is also recommended for those who do sex work or who have condomless anal or vaginal sex with multiple sexual partners. Heterosexual sex may yield a lower incidence of HIV transmission; however, the use of PrEP is just as valid and effective especially if you expect to have several sexual partners. Couples who are monogamous are considered at low risk for becoming HIV positive and do not need to start taking PrEP.

## The Process for Getting PrEP step-by-step:

- Contact a doctor to discuss PrEP and your eligibility. It can be any family medicine doctor, general practitioner, or Nurse Practitioner. (For example, this can include a walk-in clinic, your own family doctor, or a doctor from the Halifax Sexual Health Centre)
- Sign up for NS Pharmacare if not already on it, or if you don't have private insurance that covers PrEP. The cost of PrEP is covered by special authorization through the Nova Scotia Family Pharmacare Program. You will first need to enrol yourself in the program and establish if you are eligible for exception status.  
[https://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/documents/family\\_pharmacare/Family\\_Pharmacare\\_Registration\\_Form.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/documents/family_pharmacare/Family_Pharmacare_Registration_Form.pdf)). Once this is done, your doctor or care provider will need to provide special authorization through this form available at:  
<https://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/exception-status-drugs.asp>. This form will also guide your doctor or care provider in assessing your need for PrEP if they are not well informed on the drug. Otherwise, some private insurance plans will cover PrEP.

These may also come with their own special authorization forms that your doctor or care provider will need to fill out.

- Your doctor will order baseline blood work (STBBIs, liver function, etc.), give you a bloodwork requisition and fill out an Exemption Form for Pharmacare. If you have private insurance, you should check if they also have exemptions forms for PrEP. If so, bring those with you to be signed by your doctor.
- Set up a date and time to get your blood drawn. You can book an appointment for bloodwork at <https://booking.nshealth.ca>
- Set up a follow-up appointment with your doctor once they receive your bloodwork results to review bloodwork, talk about next-steps, and to get a PrEP prescription filled out and sent to your pharmacy of choice.
- Repeat bloodwork, testing, and follow-up appointments will be required once you start taking PrEP to ensure you continue to be able to access refills and to monitor any side effects or concerns you may be having.

Roadblocks typically arise when a doctor isn't knowledgeable about PrEP and/or when either the patient or doctor is unfamiliar with the Pharmacare process, the exemption forms, and if the paperwork isn't filled out appropriately.

For more information visit:

- <https://shns.ca/prep-for-hiv/>
- <https://prepnovascotia.ca/>
- <https://acns.ns.ca/info-resources/prep.html>
- <https://www.readytoknow.ca/testing-support/care-pathways/nova-scotia-care-pathwa/>  
(section titled "Accessing PrEP in Nova Scotia")