



Among the concerns a survivor may have following a sexual assault, the fear of HIV infection is one that many share. While this resource cannot serve as a substitute for sound medical advice, the following information is intended to answer common questions related to accessing and using post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and to connect survivors to available resources. While the risk of contracting HIV from a sexual assault is relatively low, there are still options to help reduce it.¹

You can find additional information at njcasa.org/find-help/PEP.

What is PEP?

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is a series of pills a person can take after exposure to HIV. *Exposure* is defined as coming into contact with body fluids of someone with HIV, such as blood, semen, and vaginal fluids. When taken within 72 hours of exposure, PEP lowers a person's chance of getting HIV.² The medicines used in PEP are called antiretroviral medications (ART). These medicines work by stopping HIV from spreading through your body.

Is PEP something I should consider?

PEP is available for folks who may have been exposed to HIV in the last three days (72 hours). PEP may be an option if:

- Someone committed sexual violence against you and their HIV status is unknown;
- You experienced exposure to HIV through unprotected sex;
- You experienced possible exposure to HIV through shared needles, syringes, or drug injection equipment.³

How do I take PEP? How long will I be on it?

You take PEP 1-2 times a day for at least 28 days (four weeks). When a healthcare provider prescribes PEP to you, instructions for taking the medication will be explained in detail. *It is very important to follow all instructions and complete the full course of medication in order for PEP to be most effective.* Be sure to discuss any other medications, herbal medicines, and vitamins you may be taking with your healthcare provider and pharmacist when receiving PEP.³ For additional instructions and recommendations for taking PEP, check out this [PEP User Guide](#).

Do I need to report my experience to receive PEP? Is receiving PEP confidential?

Before you get PEP, the nurse or doctor will talk with you about your possible exposure to HIV to decide whether PEP is right for you. This means that a disclosure may be necessary to receive a prescription/be given PEP. This information will remain confidential between you and your prescriber and **reporting to law enforcement is not required in order to access PEP**. However, if you are seeking assistance with payment for PEP through the [Victims of Crime Compensation Office](#) in New Jersey (VCCO), additional reporting to law enforcement may be necessary in order to qualify for compensation.

How do I access PEP?

In New Jersey, there are a number of avenues to accessing PEP. For immediate access to PEP, you can seek services in emergency rooms across the state. For assistance with referrals and accessing services, state resources include:

- [NJ County Health Departments](#) - Each county health department maintains resources and referrals for PEP services.
- [Planned Parenthood of Northern, Central, and Southern New Jersey](#) - PPNCSNJ offers services and referrals for PEP.
- [Hyacinth](#) - Hyacinth is New Jersey's largest and first HIV service provider. With offices across the state, Hyacinth offers access to treatment programs, resources, and financial assistance for PEP and other HIV services.
- [Henry J. Austin Health Center](#) - The Henry J. Austin Health Center provides bilingual HIV prevention, counseling, testing, and referral services.
- [The New Jersey AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline \(1-800-624-2377\)](#) - The NJ AIDS/HIV/STD Hotline provides information about referrals to testing, prevention, and treatment services, including PEP.

For survivors of sexual assault seeking forensic exams at Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) hospitals, PEP services and/or referral services should be available at each hospital. For additional information, survivors and their loved ones can access the free, compassionate support of a Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate by calling the statewide 24-hour sexual assault hotline at **1-800-601-7200** or by finding a county-based sexual violence program [here](#).

How do I pay for PEP? What can I do if I don't have health insurance? What can I do if I don't want to use my health insurance?

PEP is covered by Medicaid and most private insurance plans.⁴ Co-pay assistance and cost sharing programs are available. In general, coverage of PEP varies by county. Consult with your prescriber for more information about payment assistance. Your healthcare provider can apply for free PEP medicines through the medication assistance programs run by the manufacturers. Enrollment applications, such as [Gilead's Advancing Access form](#), can be filled out online, over the phone, or through fax.

If you are a survivor of sexual assault and receiving a forensic exam in New Jersey, coverage of the cost of PEP varies by county. You may qualify for partial or total reimbursement for medicines and clinical care costs through the Victims of Crime Compensation Office in New Jersey (VCCO). *(Please note that to receive assistance through VCCO, a police report may be necessary).* More information and the application for the claim are available [here](#).

REFERENCES

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2. "About Pep." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 21, 2021. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/pep/about-pep.html>.
3. Parenthood, Planned. "Pep and HIV." Planned Parenthood. Accessed February 15, 2022. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/stds-hiv-safer-sex/hiv-aids/pep>.
4. "Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)." Howard Brown Health, August 30, 2019. <https://howardbrown.org/service/post-exposure-prophylaxis-pep/>.

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The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) is the statewide organization representing 21 county-based rape crisis centers and Rutgers University's Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance. NJCASA elevates the voices of survivors and service providers through advocacy, training, and support for efforts to create safer communities for all.