

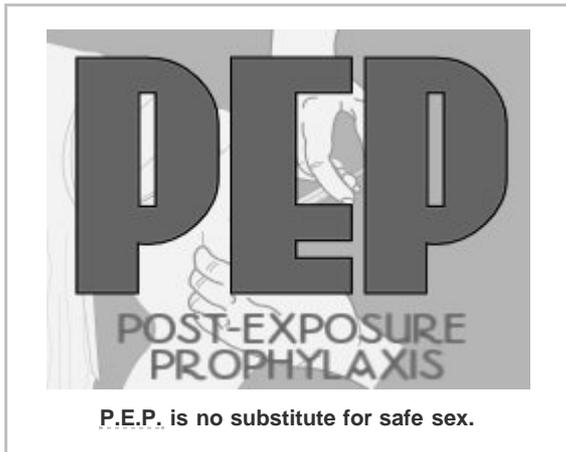
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Post-Exposure Prophylaxis

If you've had unsafe sex, had a condom break, or shared injecting equipment, you may have been exposed to [H.I.V.](#)

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If you have had sex without a condom, shared injecting equipment or ever had a condom break during sex, you may have been exposed to the [H.I.V.](#) virus.

The drugs used in [P.E.P.](#) are powerful and commonly cause difficult side-effects like cramps, diarrhoea, vomiting, headaches and tiredness.

If a condom breaks or you feel that you had sex that was not as safe as it could be to protect you from [H.I.V.](#), there is a new option you should be aware of, it's called [P.E.P.](#)

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis" ([P.E.P.](#)) is simply a short course of the drugs currently used to treat [H.I.V.](#) / [AIDS](#).

Doctors believe that taking a short course of anti-[H.I.V.](#) drugs may help prevent you from becoming infected in situations where you may have been exposed to the virus (through sex without a condom, sharing injecting equipment or when a condom breaks).

[P.E.P.](#) is no substitute for safe sex. The drugs used in [P.E.P.](#) are powerful and commonly cause difficult side-effects like cramps, diarrhoea, vomiting, headaches and tiredness. They also require you to stick to a difficult routine of diet and pill-taking schedules for four weeks.

There is also no guarantee that the drugs will help to prevent you from becoming infected, only the possibility that it may help reduce the risk.

Because [P.E.P.](#) does not always work, the best option is still to avoid sharing needles and avoid anal or vaginal sex without a condom.

To ensure the maximum benefit of [P.E.P.](#) you need to take the drugs as soon as possible after the exposure. The drugs may still be helpful for up to seventy-two hours after the exposure but are best within the first couple of hours, so seek medical advice straight away!

In New South Wales [P.E.P.](#) is only available from a doctor. Contact your local sexual health clinic, hospital emergency department or doctor who specialises in [H.I.V.](#) as soon as you can. A doctor will be able to discuss your options.

During business hours you can also get [P.E.P.](#) from Sexual Health Clinics or the doctor that usually performs your [H.I.V.](#)/sexual health examinations. You can also get [P.E.P.](#) from hospital emergency departments. Be sure to let a staff member know that you need to take your first dose as soon as possible.

Remember, if you're not sure where to go for [P.E.P.](#) or would just like more information, don't wait, call freecall 1800 816 518 or your local sexual health clinic.

If you attend a hospital emergency room for [P.E.P.](#), you may have to wait because of other patients requiring more urgent attention.

However if a clinic or hospital refuses to consider you for [P.E.P.](#) or tells you they do not provide it, you have the right to make a complaint to:

Health Care Complaints Commission of [N.S.W.](#)

Level 13, 323 Castlereagh Street (corner of Hay St)

Sydney [N.S.W.](#) 2000

telephone (02) 9219 7444 or freecall 1800 043 159 or [T.T.Y.](#) (02) 9219 7555.

[Health Care Complaints Commission of \[N.S.W.\]\(#\) website](#) . 

under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

The Gender Centre is committed to developing and providing services and activities, which enhance the ability of people with gender issues to make informed choices. We offer a wide range of services to people with gender issues, their partners, family members and friends in New South Wales. We are an accommodation service and also act as an education, support, training and referral resource centre to other organisations and service providers. The Gender Centre is committed to educating the public and service providers about the needs of people with gender issues. We specifically aim to provide a high quality service, which acknowledges human rights and ensures respect and confidentiality.