

“How do women feel about taking medication before sex to reduce their risk of getting HIV?”

Findings from: [Awareness, knowledge, and perceptions of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis \(PrEP\) among women in England](#)

What was the study about?

HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is the taking of antiviral medication before potential exposure to HIV, to prevent infection. In England, PrEP has routinely been available from sexual health services since October 2020. However, despite accounting for approximately 20% of new HIV diagnoses in 2021, less than 2% of PrEP users were women. We want to find out why this could be, and what women think about HIV PrEP.

Why is this important?

This is important as understanding what women think about HIV PrEP will help us to increase engagement and access to PrEP, reducing the spread of HIV.

What did we do?

We carried out three studies to investigate awareness, knowledge and thoughts on PrEP among women in England:

- The first study was a review of other studies/literature looking at PrEP.
- The second study was interviews with 18 women living in England to explore their thoughts on PrEP and how PrEP is used.
- The third study was an online survey completed by over 900 women and people born female to investigate their awareness of PrEP and preferences for how PrEP is provided.

Key findings

- Findings from the review show a variation in how awareness and interest of PrEP is defined and measured.
- Many women were aware of PrEP, but didn't know how it worked, who could use it, how and when to take it, or why someone might want to.
- The online survey showed people preferred to take PrEP in the form of a long-acting injection or event-based (taken directly before each potential exposure to HIV), rather than taking a daily pill. Many people were interested in being able to access PrEP from a pharmacy or GP surgery, as well as sexual health services.

What do these findings mean?

These findings have highlighted the need to improve access to PrEP for women who need it, and to include women-specific information in education and awareness campaigns. We need to make sure that wider conversations around sexual health include talking about HIV prevention and PrEP, and to make sure that PrEP is available outside of sexual health services so that PrEP and PrEP information is more accessible for women. These findings can help to inform policies and practice to help increase PrEP access and engagement.

Related publications not already linked to project:

<https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10193814/>

<https://www.aidsmap.com/news/apr-2023/current-prep-provision-does-not-align-womens-preferences-uk-survey-suggests>