Counselling Should:

• **Be sensitive, inclusive, and non-judgmental**
  Recognize that behaviour change is difficult and human beings are not perfect

• **Be presented as a personal choice**
  Counselling should support the client in making a personal choice based on their needs and desires.

• **Problem solve and foster motivation**
  Offer choices and tangible solutions; identify small wins and achievable next steps in reducing risk.

• **Be client-driven and based on their needs, resources, and preferences**
  Counselling should be interactive and tailored to the client’s specific needs and lifestyle.

• **Be brief**
  10-15 minute check-ins about experience with PrEP and sexual health protection plans are most effective; longer (~30 minute) sessions may be necessary at the first PrEP consultation or if specific issues arise.
Is PrEP Safe?

PrEP is very safe. PrEP is also safe with alcohol and drugs, as well as contraceptives and other medicine.
**PrEP = NEW + SAFE + HIV Prevention Method**

PrEP is a new and safe method for HIV-negative people to reduce their risk of becoming infected. It is a pill that has 2 anti-HIV medicines: 200 mg of emtricitabine and 300 mg of tenofovir. HIV-negative people who take PrEP **every day** can lower their risk of HIV by more than 90 percent.

**Things you need to know:**

**How long does it take for PrEP to work?**

After taking oral PrEP for 7 days you are fully protected, but you must continue to take it daily to remain protected.

**PrEP is an extra HIV prevention option** and, where possible, should be used in combination with other prevention methods. Other prevention methods include:

- Condoms
- Counselling
- PEP
- Healthy lifestyles
- STIs
- Treatment
- MMC
- ART for partners living with HIV

**PrEP does not:**

PrEP does not provide immediate protection—it must be taken daily for 7 days before it offers full protection, and should continue to be taken daily. It does not prevent any other sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy. PrEP does not protect you from HIV after exposure.
How should I take PrEP?

You take one PrEP pill once a day with or without food. It helps to take the pill at the same time each day so that you do not forget.
## Checklist: Counselling Prior to PrEP Initiation

This is a list of important topics to discuss with the client when explaining PrEP for the first time and deciding whether it might be right for him or her. It is not comprehensive. Please ensure you use your organisation’s available counselling tools for each of these topics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What to discuss:</th>
<th>How to discuss it:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assess his or her risk profile</strong></td>
<td>Develop a clear picture of the client’s risk profile and lifestyle; make sure he or she understands how their lifestyle impacts their risk profile. IMPORTANT: use your organisation’s risk assessment tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combination prevention</strong></td>
<td>Taken daily, PrEP is an additional prevention option. It should be used in combination with other prevention tools, like condoms, PEP, healthy lifestyles, treatment for STIs, male medical circumcision, and ART for partners living with HIV. REMEMBER: counselling should highlight that ideally PrEP should be used with condoms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condom negotiation</strong></td>
<td>Some clients, especially sex workers, may not be able to enforce condom use. Provide guidance on how to safely advocate for condom use by the partner. IMPORTANT: does your organisation have a tool that can help you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STIs</strong></td>
<td>PrEP does not protect against STIs. Regular testing for STIs is encouraged, regardless of PrEP use. REMEMBER: STIs may increase the risk of HIV acquisition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contraception / Fertility goals</strong></td>
<td>PrEP is not a contraceptive. PrEP is safe to use with all contraceptive methods. Consult with a physician to provide guidance on how to proceed if the client becomes pregnant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adherence (daily)</strong></td>
<td>For PrEP to be effective, the pill must be taken every day. Adherence counselling is critical for full HIV protection. <em>More detail is provided in the Adherence section that follows.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Side effects</strong></td>
<td>Some people get mild side effects when they start PrEP, but they generally go away after a few weeks. The most common side effects include: nausea, headache, tiredness, diarrhea, depression, abnormal dreams, vomiting, rash, problems sleeping, and changes in appetite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intimate partner violence (IPV)</strong></td>
<td>People who have abusive or controlling partners may find it more difficult to take care of their sexual health and to adhere to PrEP. Ask about the client’s relationships, and for clients experiencing abuse, provide counseling and referrals, when possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talking to your partner, family, friends, etc.</strong></td>
<td>Deciding whether to tell anyone about your PrEP use is a completely personal decision. Some people find it helpful to tell friends or family for support and to provide reminders to take the pill daily. Discuss with the client whether and how they would like to discuss PrEP with loved ones and how to overcome any potential barriers to gaining their support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visit schedule</strong></td>
<td>Explain the visit schedule for PrEP use. The client must return for follow-up visits at the first month, and then every three months. They must also return to the clinic monthly to pick up their pills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What happens if I forget to take PrEP for a day?

If you missed a pill, take it as soon as you remember, and continue to take daily as before.
## Checklist: Follow-Up Counselling

Follow-up sessions will most likely be brief. It is critical to review adherence during these discussions and re-evaluate the client’s risk profile if he or she has experienced lifestyle changes. Please ensure you use your organisation’s available counselling tools for each of these topics.

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<td>Re-assess his or her risk profile</td>
<td>Discuss any lifestyle changes that may affect the suitability of PrEP use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination prevention</td>
<td>Touch base with the client’s sexual health plan and make sure he or she has access to other prevention resources, as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STIs</td>
<td>PrEP does not protect against STIs. Regular testing for STIs is encouraged, regardless of PrEP use. <strong>IMPORTANT:</strong> If your client presents with an STI, they will need additional counselling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraception / Fertility goals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side effects</td>
<td>Touch base about the client’s experience with side effects. <strong>REMEMBER:</strong> If side effects are serious, please involve a doctor with your client’s care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate partner violence (IPV)</td>
<td>People who have abusive or controlling partners may find it more difficult to take care of their sexual health and to adhere to PrEP. Ask about the client’s relationships, and for clients experiencing abuse, provide counseling and referrals, when possible.</td>
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**Group counselling sessions** can be a great way to impact social behavior and address issues relating to adherence, empowerment, self-efficacy beliefs, and stigma.
Can I share PrEP with other people?

No, it is important not to share your PrEP pills.
Adherence is critical to provide protection against HIV.

- Suggest methods to remind the client to take the pill every day
  
  **For example:**
  - Take the pill at the same time every day;
  - Incorporate it into your daily activities, like part of your morning routine or when a favourite TV show comes on;
  - Set a phone alarm;
  - Encourage partners, family members or friends to remind you;
  - Use daily pillboxes

- Discuss what to do if a pill is missed – take it as soon as remember

**Remember:** Supporting pill-taking should be honest, direct, and non-confrontational

**Steps to follow:**

1. Assess how pill taking is going for PrEP client
2. Positively affirm client to support provider/client relationship
3. Identify a motivator to support effective pill taking
4. Provide PrEP education regarding effective use and effectiveness of PrEP
5. Identify barriers to effective use
6. Provide realistic strategies to address barriers
7. Discuss use of other HIV prevention measures that are relevant to situation
8. Client leaves with realistic and achievable plan to increase or sustain use
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Examining Risk Profile

“Let’s look at your risk and options to prevent HIV.”
“Let’s talk about how PrEP fits into your risk reduction efforts.”

Considering PrEP

“PrEP is a great way to prevent HIV, but it isn’t for everyone.”
“Taking a pill every day for ongoing protection from HIV might not be for everybody, but PrEP is an excellent and much-needed extra prevention method for people at high risk of getting HIV.”
“The use of PrEP is supported by South African medical experts, the South African government, and many international experts.”
“You’ve decided to use PrEP as a way to protect yourself and that’s great.”
“If you start PrEP, you do not have to take it for the rest of your life.”

Combination Prevention

“PrEP is a great way to prevent HIV, but it doesn’t protect against other STIs or prevent pregnancy.”
“Using condoms and PrEP together will give you the best level of protection from both HIV and other STIs.”

Discussing Adherence

“Pill taking isn’t easy and takes some practice, especially if you aren’t used to taking pills.”
“It’s okay to not be perfect at taking your pills; it takes time. But remember in order for PrEP to work, you have to take your pills regularly.”
“I’m here to help by working with you to figure out a way to make taking your pills easier, so that you get the most protection you can.”
How long do you take PrEP?

You take PrEP for as long as you feel at risk for HIV infection. It is not a lifelong medication. Speak with your doctor if you decide PrEP is no longer right for you.
Knowledge of PrEP

Q: How should I take PrEP?
A: You take one PrEP pill once a day with or without food. It helps to take the pill at the same time each day so that you do not forget.

Q: How long do you take PrEP?
A: You take PrEP for as long as you feel at risk for HIV infection. It is not a lifelong medication. Speak with your doctor if you decide PrEP is no longer right for you.

Q: Do I have to use condoms while taking PrEP?
A: PrEP is an extra HIV prevention option and where possible, should be used in combination with condoms.

Q: How do I store my PrEP medication?
A: PrEP should be kept in a cool, dry place, away from children, in a tightly closed container.

Q: Can I share PrEP with other people?
A: No, it is important not to share your PrEP pills.

Drug Interactions

Q: Can I take PrEP if I use drugs or alcohol?
A: Yes, PrEP is safe with alcohol and drug.

Q: Can I use PrEP and contraception together?
A: Yes, PrEP can be taken with any kind of contraception.

PrEP and Pregnancy

Q: What must I do if I become pregnant while taking PrEP?
A: Inform your clinician and together you will discuss how to proceed.

Drug Resistance Fears

Q: If I seroconvert while on PrEP, will I be resistant to ARVs?
A: If you are on PrEP and still get HIV the health care providers will do some tests to determine why you seroconverted. It does not necessarily mean that you will be resistant to ARVs. (ex: window period, low adherence, infected with TDF resistant virus, etc)

PrEP Adherence

Q: What happens if I forget to take PrEP for a day?
A: If you missed a pill, take it as soon as you remember, and continue to take daily as before.

Q: When and how can I stop PrEP?
A: If you decide PrEP is no longer useful, discuss stopping with a healthcare provider. You will get information for how long after you should continue to make sure you are properly protected.

Service Delivery

Q: Where is PrEP available?
A: Currently in South Africa, PrEP is being provided through a limited number of service delivery sites.
Do I have to use condoms while taking PrEP?

PrEP is an extra HIV prevention option and where possible, should be used in combination with condoms.