

Supplementary File S2

Patient Information Handout

Your Guide to Starting Long-Acting Injectable PrEP
What to Expect Between Your Prescription and First Injection

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Viruses Journal Supplementary Materials

1 What is Long-Acting Injectable PrEP?

Long-acting injectable PrEP is a medication that prevents HIV infection. Instead of taking a daily pill, you get an injection every **2 months** (cabotegravir) or **6 months** (lenacapavir).

1.1 It Works Really Well

- Over 96% effective at preventing HIV
- Once you start, 8 out of 10 people keep getting their injections
- Most people prefer injections over daily pills

2 The “Bridge Period” – What You Need to Know

2.1 What Is It?

The “bridge period” is the time **between when your doctor prescribes the injection and when you actually get your first shot**. This usually takes **2–4 weeks**, but can be shorter if you’re already on PrEP pills.

2.2 Why Can’t I Start Today?

Unlike PrEP pills (which you can start the same day), the injection lasts for months in your body. We need to make absolutely sure you don’t have HIV before giving you the injection. This requires:

1. ✓ An HIV test
2. ✓ Waiting for results
3. ✓ Insurance approval (if needed)
4. ✓ Scheduling your injection appointment

Important

During this waiting period, you are **not protected** from HIV yet. If you’re at risk, talk to your doctor about using daily PrEP pills while you wait, or other prevention methods.

3 What Happens Next? Your Timeline

3.1 TODAY (Prescription Visit)

- ☐ Your doctor orders an HIV test
- ☐ Your doctor submits insurance approval (if needed)
- ☐ You schedule your HIV test appointment
- ☐ You might be assigned a “navigator” to help you through the process

3.2 Within 1–2 Days

- ☐ You get your HIV test (blood draw or rapid test)
- ☐ A navigator (if assigned) will call you to check in

3.3 Within 3–7 Days

- ☐ Your HIV test results come back
- ☐ Your doctor reviews results with you
- ☐ Your injection appointment is confirmed

3.4 Within 2–4 Weeks (Goal)

- ☐ **You get your first injection!**
- ☐ You schedule your next injection (2 or 6 months away)

4 How We'll Stay in Touch

You'll receive:

- **Text messages** reminding you about appointments
- **Phone calls** from your navigator or clinic
- **Email** (if you prefer)

Important

Please respond to texts and calls! We want to make sure you successfully get started.

5 What If I Need Help?

5.1 Transportation

Problem: “I don’t have a way to get to my appointments.”

Solution: Tell your navigator or clinic! Many programs can provide:

- Uber/Lyft vouchers
- Public transit passes
- Mileage reimbursement

5.2 Childcare

Problem: “I can’t leave my kids to go to appointments.”

Solution: Ask about:

- On-site childcare at the clinic
- Childcare vouchers
- Home-based services

5.3 Schedule Conflicts

Problem: “I work during clinic hours.”

Solution: Many clinics offer:

- Early morning or evening appointments
- Weekend hours
- Flexible scheduling

5.4 Privacy Concerns

Problem: “I don’t want my family to know I’m taking PrEP.”

Solution: Tell your doctor! They can:

- Use confidential communication methods
- Help manage insurance statements
- Protect your privacy

5.5 Insurance Issues

Problem: “My insurance denied the medication.”

Solution: Your clinic can:

- Appeal the denial
- Help with patient assistance programs
- Find alternative payment options

5.6 Other Barriers

Whatever barrier you're facing, **please tell your navigator or doctor**. They want to help you succeed!

6 Red Flags – When to Call

Call your clinic if:

- × You haven't heard from anyone within 3 days of your prescription
- × Your HIV test wasn't scheduled
- × It's been over a week and you don't have test results
- × Your insurance denied coverage and no one has called you
- × You can't make your scheduled appointments
- × You have questions or concerns

Don't Wait!

The sooner you call, the sooner we can fix the problem!

7 Frequently Asked Questions

7.1 “Why is this taking so long?”

We know it's frustrating to wait. The injection lasts for months, so we must be 100% certain you don't have HIV. This is for your safety.

7.2 “Can I start PrEP pills while I wait?”

YES! Ask your doctor. Many people take daily PrEP pills during the bridge period to stay protected, then switch to the injection when ready.

7.3 “What if I miss an appointment?”

Call us immediately! We can reschedule. Missing one appointment doesn't mean you can't get the injection – we just need to get you back on track.

7.4 “Will the injection hurt?”

Most people describe it as similar to a flu shot. The injection site might be sore for a few days. Your doctor will tell you how to manage any discomfort.

7.5 “What happens after my first injection?”

You'll schedule your next injection (2 or 6 months away). After the first injection, it gets much easier – you just show up for your scheduled appointments!

7.6 “What if I change my mind?”

That’s okay! You can stop at any time. Just let your doctor know. If you’re not sure, talk to your navigator – they can address your concerns.

8 Tips for Success

8.1 ✓ Respond to texts and calls

Even a quick “yes” or “got it” helps us know you’re still on track.

8.2 ✓ Ask for help early

Don’t wait until the day of your appointment to figure out transportation or childcare.

8.3 ✓ Keep your appointments

Every appointment gets you closer to starting. If you can’t make it, call to reschedule right away.

8.4 ✓ Be honest about barriers

We can’t help if we don’t know what challenges you’re facing.

8.5 ✓ Stay motivated

Remember why you wanted the injection! Once you get started, you won’t have to think about daily pills anymore.

9 Your Team

You’re not alone in this process. Your team includes:

9.1 Your Doctor/Nurse Practitioner

- Prescribed the injection
- Reviews your HIV tests
- Administers your injections

9.2 Your Navigator (if assigned)

- Helps you overcome barriers
- Coordinates appointments
- Answers questions
- Available by phone/text

9.3 Clinic Staff

- Schedules appointments
- Processes insurance
- Sends reminders

9.4 YOU

- The most important member!
- Stay in communication
- Ask for help when needed
- Show up for appointments

10 Contact Information

Your Navigator: _____

Phone: _____

Text: _____

Clinic Main Number: _____

Emergency/Urgent Questions: _____

Best Time to Reach You: _____

Preferred Contact Method: Phone / Text / Email (circle one)

11 Why This Matters

HIV prevention is serious healthcare. Research shows that almost **half of people who are pre-scribed this injection never get their first shot**. Not because the medication doesn't work – it works great! But because of the challenges in the weeks between prescription and injection.

That's why we're putting in this extra effort to help you succeed.

The injection is highly effective and convenient once you start. We just need to get you through these first few weeks. With your participation and our support, you **WILL** get there!

12 Quick Checklist – Keep This Handy

12.1 Before your first injection, you need:

- ☐ HIV test completed
- ☐ Results reviewed (must be negative)
- ☐ Insurance approved (or payment arranged)

- ☐ Injection appointment scheduled
- ☐ Transportation arranged
- ☐ Childcare arranged (if needed)
- ☐ Questions answered

12.2 When you're ready:

- ☐ Show up for your appointment
- ☐ Get your injection
- ☐ Schedule next appointment
- ☐ Done! Much easier from here on!

13 Remember

- **96% effective** once you start
- **4–6 appointments per year** (vs. 365 daily pills)
- **Most people prefer** injections over pills
- **Your navigator is here to help** – use them!
- **Thousands of people** have successfully started – you can too!

14 After Your First Injection

Once you get your first injection, the hard part is over! You'll come back in **2 months** (cabotegravir) or **6 months** (lenacapavir) for your next shot. No daily pills to remember. No monthly pharmacy visits.

You've got this!

This guide is based on research published by Demidont & (2025) in Viruses journal. The "bridge period" is a newly recognized challenge in LAI-PrEP implementation, and your clinic is using evidence-based strategies to help you succeed.

Questions? Call your navigator or clinic – we're here to help!

15 For More Information

- **CDC PrEP Information:** www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html
- **PrEP Hotline** (free, confidential): 1-855-HIV-PrEP (1-855-448-7737)
- **National Clinician Consultation Center:** nccc.ucsf.edu
- **PrEPWatch** (LAI-PrEP information): www.prepwatch.org