

PREVENTING HIV AFTER RAPE

STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO PROTECT YOUR HEALTH

Rape can happen to anyone – woman or man, girl or boy.
If rape happens to you, remember it is not your fault.
This pamphlet tells you about steps that you can take to protect your health if you have been raped.

What are my rights?

- You have **the right** to be treated with respect and dignity at all times by doctors, nurses, police officers, prosecutors and social workers who help you after the rape.
- You have **the right** to be given full and accurate information about your health. Health workers must tell you about any medicines they can recommend to you, as well as the cost of these medicines.
- Information about your health **is confidential**. No health care worker can tell others about your HIV or health status without your permission.
- **You have the right to refuse treatment.**

I am worried about being exposed to HIV after rape. What can I do?

- There are **anti-retroviral** medicines that you can take that may reduce the risk of becoming infected with HIV.
- **You can take these medicines (anti-retroviral) if you have been raped or forced to have anal sex.**
- You have been told about how these medicines might stop you from being infected with HIV.
- You have been told about the possible side effects of these medicines.
- You have had a **voluntary** HIV test and have tested negative.
- You have made your own choice to take these medicines.

How can I get these medicines?

1. Go to a **doctor** as soon as you can and ask about anti-retroviral medicines that could reduce the risk of getting HIV. These medicines are called "**post-exposure prophylactics**" or **PEP**. You must start taking the medicine as soon as possible. If more than 72 hours (3 days) have passed since you were raped, it is too late for these medicines to reduce the risk of getting HIV from rape.
2. You should ask the doctor to give you an HIV test. Before taking an HIV test you must be **counselled** and receive information about what the test means. You should also get counselling after you receive the results of an HIV test.
3. The HIV test should be done **voluntary**, if you do not want to be tested, you can still receive the medicines.
4. While you are waiting for the results of the HIV test, the doctor may give you the medicine so that you can start taking it immediately. This is called a starter pack.
5. If you test HIV positive, the medicines that may reduce your risk of getting HIV from rape, will be stopped.
6. Ask the doctor about things you can do to look after yourself when you have HIV. **Find out about:** organisations and people that can help you **live positively**.
7. If you test HIV negative, take the medicine for **28 days**. Remember that the starter pack of 3 days' medicine will not protect you from HIV. **You must take the full course for all 28 days or it will not work.**
8. These medicines are strong and may have side effects like headaches, tiredness, skin rash, a running stomach, nausea and others. These side effects are usually not serious and will not last long. If the **side effects** are very unpleasant, go back to the doctor.

9. Have another HIV test after six weeks, three months and again after six months after the rape. It is very important for you to find out the results of your HIV test so that you can know your HIV status. If you test HIV negative each time, it means that you did not contract HIV from the rape.

Where can I get these medicines?

- You can get these medicines at the health centre through the SGBV programme for free.

Can children take these medicines?

Yes. Children can receive the treatment as described above. Small children will be given syrup instead of tablets. Make sure that you understand how to take the treatment or how to give it to your child.

There are other steps you can take to protect your health

Ask the doctor for:

- Antibiotic medicines to stop you from getting a **Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)** from the rapist.
- The "**morning-after**" pill to prevent you from becoming pregnant from the rape.
- If you are pregnant, find out about the possibility of HIV infection for your unborn baby from your doctor.
- If you are having sex, always use a **condom**. This is **safer for you** and your partner.

Rape is very traumatic.
It is important that you talk to someone who can listen to you and support you after rape.
A counsellor or good friend can help you cope with your feelings.