

Florida Passes Bill Allowing Pharmacists to Provide PEP to Prevent HIV

The Florida legislation permits pharmacists to screen for HIV, dispense post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) meds and more.

May 2, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

Florida pharmacists will soon be able to provide more [HIV](#) care to their clients, thanks to a bill signed by Republican governor Ron DeSantis. Specifically, [pharmacists](#) can screen for HIV and provide post-exposure prophylaxis ([PEP](#)), which refers to medication people take to prevent HIV transmission shortly after a high-risk exposure.

The law takes effect July 1, according to a news release from Rep. Gallop Franklin (D-Tallahassee), who sponsored the bill and is also a pharmacist.

“[Florida](#) has among the highest HIV infection rates in the country. With Governor Ron DeSantis’ signature today, Florida is taking a giant leap forward to put a check on the advance of HIV/AIDS in the Sunshine State,” Franklin said in the [news release](#).

In 2022, there were 124,577 Floridians living with HIV, and more than 600 died from HIV-related illness, the [Florida Department of Health reports](#).

Thanks to the new law, more than 36,000 licensed pharmacists who enter into collaborative agreements with physicians can begin screening Floridians for HIV and dispensing PEP.

PEP involves taking a short course of antiretroviral drugs, usually for a month, after a high-risk exposure. To be most effective, PEP should be started immediately after possible exposure, waiting no more than 72 hours.

Because of this tight time schedule, it is important that people have easy and fast access to PEP. For many folks, a visit to the neighborhood pharmacist can be quicker (and cheaper) than trying to schedule a visit with a family doctor or other health care provider.

Unlike pre-exposure prophylaxis ([PrEP](#)), which is taken in advance of potential exposure and includes one or two meds, PEP is started afterward and requires a full-combination antiretroviral regimen of three meds. The latest guidelines, last updated in 2016, recommend a 28-day course of raltegravir (Isentress) plus tenofovir disoproxil fumarate/emtricitabine (Truvada or generic

equivalents). [Click here](#) for more about PEP.

According to [Florida Politics](#), the bill as it was originally filed would have allowed pharmacists to dispense both PrEP and PEP, but the legislation was amended to include only PEP.

The Florida legislation, [HB 159](#), passed the Florida House and Senate unanimously April 25. It was sponsored in the state Senate by Alexis Calatayud (R-Miami).

Franklin named the bill the John W. Rheay Act, in honor of Rep. Dana Trabulsy's (R-Fort Pierce) brother, who died of AIDS 29 years ago.

"With this new law on the books, we will enlist licensed pharmacists in the health care army, working collaboratively with physicians in a strong partnership to save lives by reducing the number of adults with HIV," Franklin said.

To read more, click [#PEP](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[PEP-in-Pocket Is Another Option for HIV Prevention](#)," "[Biktarvy Can Be a Good Option for Post-Exposure Prophylaxis](#)" and "[One Third of State Health Department Websites Neglect HIV Facts on U=U](#)."