

Govt rolls out nationwide supply of HIV-prevention injection drug

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Government has rolled out a nationwide supply of the long-acting HIV-prevention drug, Lenacapavir.

The roll out of the drug to the public, health ministry officials said during the launch at Lira Regional Referral Hospital on Friday, will amplify the country's efforts to reduce new HIV infections.

The launch ceremony was presided over by the health minister and Lira city Woman MP-elect, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng.

The injectable medication, Aceng said, will be added to

Uganda's expanded HIV-prevention strategy. She added that it will be introduced as a twice-yearly option for people assessed to be at substantial risk of acquiring HIV.

Health officials said Lenacapavir is not a vaccine, but a long-acting antiretroviral drug used for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), administered every six months to individuals who test HIV-negative but remain highly vulnerable to infection.

Health ministry officials have also identified vulnerable populations most affected by new HIV infections. These include sexually active adolescent girls and young women aged 15-24, discordant couples, female



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Front row: Aceng (third-right), accompanied by the deputy chief of Mission of the US Embassy in Kampala, Mikael Cleverley (second-right), UNAIDS country director Jacqueline Makokha (right) and other officials during the launch of the Lenacapavir injectable prep at Lira hospital on Friday

sex workers and their clients, fisherfolk, long-distance truck drivers and individuals with

multiple sexual partners. Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers who fall within high-

risk categories will also be eligible under the programme. According to Dr Herbert

Kadama, the national PrEP co-ordinator at the health ministry, access will be strictly guided by clinical screening at designated health facilities.

Health workers will assess eligibility based on HIV status and behavioural risk.

"We don't have a test for lying, but we have a screening tool that all facilities will use and this jab will be 100% free of charge and accessed strictly at the government facilities. We screen people hoping they give us the right information," Kadama said.

Commenting on the effectiveness of the six-month HIV-prevention jab, Aceng said: "This marks a major milestone in our fight against HIV."