

HEALTH FACILITIES OFFERING HIV INJECTION

By Agnes Kyotalengerire

A total of 103 public health facilities across the country are now offering lenacapavir, the long-acting injectable drug for HIV prevention, following the recent national launch and roll-out.

“We received 40 doses of lenacapavir and four people have gotten their first doses,” the in-charge of Mbarara Municipal Council health Centre IV, Dr Alfred Mugarura, said.

Mugarura said prior to the delivery of the drug, a team of health workers at the same facility was trained on how to identify eligible beneficiaries and how to administer the drug.

The pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) co-ordinator at the health ministry, Dr Hebert Kadama, confirmed the development.

He said this is part of the April phase 1 implementation plan of the 19,000 doses that were donated by the Global Fund.

Another batch of 7,000 doses donated by the US government is expected this May and later in August.

By December 2026, a total of 300 health facilities shall be expected to provide Lenacapavir for PrEP, Kadama said.

The facilities were selected because they serve many people, he noted.

The hospital administrator of Lira Regional Referral Hospital in Lira city, Peter Odeke Okello, said they have had an influx of people ever since the drug was launched, yet the facility was given only 40 doses. Out of those, the facility has remained, with fewer than 15 doses.

Okello says the demand for the drug is so high and “as a result, we have tightened the process of assessing and enrolling the beneficiaries”.

The hospital director of Hoima Regional Referral Hospital, Dr Ibrahim Bwaga, confirmed that the facility also received Lenacapavir, and the selected beneficiaries have already received their first doses.

The hospital administrator of Kitgum General Hospital, Geoffrey Okello, said earlier this week the facility received a total of 30 doses of Lenacapavir.

Lenacapavir, a six-month HIV prevention injection, marks a shift from daily pills to longer-acting options designed to make prevention easier, more discreet, and more effective for people at risk.

The UNAIDS country director, Jacqueline Makokha, said the rollout of lenacapavir expands the choice of available options that people can get



UNAIDS country director Makokha

to prevent HIV.

Makokha said this intervention is timely considering that Uganda registered over 37,000 new HIV infections in 2024, which translated into 100 infections per day. The most worrying bit is that a third of the new HIV infections are in young girls and young women.

Makokha said the agency is continuing to support countries and communities to align policies to ensure access, affordability and availability of lenacapavir, as well as other innovations.

WHO CAN GET LENACAPAVIR?

Dr Kadama said the lenacapavir

HIV BURDEN IN UGANDA

The 2025 national HIV estimates report reveals that 1.5 million Ugandans are living with HIV, and of those, about 930,000 are girls and women, compared to 570,000 boys and men. The same report shows that of the 14,000 new infections among young people aged 15-24 last year, nearly 70% were adolescent girls and young women. By contrast, only 17% of new infections were among boys and uncircumcised men engaging in unsafe sexual practices.

Uganda reduced new HIV infections to 37,000 in 2024, yet 4,700 babies were still born with the virus, according to the National HIV Estimates of 2025. UNAIDS data shows that 50% (2,350) of the 4,700 babies born infected with HIV in 2024 were exposed during late pregnancy. Annual AIDS-related deaths have also dropped significantly, from 54,000 in 2010 to 20,000 in 2024. Approximately 1.3 million people are currently on antiretroviral therapy (ARVs).

injectable drug is free and recipients only have to meet transport fees to health facilities.

The co-ordinator of HIV prevention at the Ministry of Health, Dr Peter Mudiope, said beneficiaries will include people at substantial risk of acquiring HIV and who have a confirmed negative HIV test; those who find it difficult to take daily oral PrEP; and commercial sex workers and their male clients.

Others include people recently diagnosed with sexually transmitted infections in the last six months and those who are unable to negotiate condom use with their partners.

Other key populations include adolescent girls and young women aged 15-24, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, fishermen, long-distance truck drivers and people in multiple sexual partnerships.

According to Dr Kadama, lenacapavir is given by injection under the skin. For protection, an individual gets one injection every six months.

Lenacapavir is well-tolerated by most people. But the most common side effects include mainly mild pain or swelling at the site of injection. Often these mild side effects decrease over time, noted Dr Kadama