

## Descovy

Abu Dhabi · access guide

# How to access Descovy for HIV-1 treatment and PrEP from Abu Dhabi: 2026 pathway via SEHA infectious diseases services and DoH-coordinated dispense

By Reserve Meds clinical & regulatory team. Last reviewed 2026-05-20.

Abu Dhabi's HIV care is delivered through the SEHA network infectious diseases services (Sheikh Khalifa Medical City, Sheikh Shakhbout Medical City, Mafraq Hospital now part of the SEHA network, Tawam Hospital in Al Ain) and through the major private hospital infectious diseases services (Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, Burjeel Medical City, NMC Royal Hospital, Mediclinic Airport Road). The Department of Health Abu Dhabi (DoH) coordinates the regulatory and funding pathway. Descovy (emtricitabine 200 mg + tenofovir alafenamide 25 mg; FTC/TAF) is the Gilead 2-NRTI backbone, registered with the Emirates Drug Establishment for HIV-1 treatment, used in combination with a third antiretroviral agent. Descovy also carries an FDA indication for HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) in selected adult populations.

This page explains how the pathway works in 2026 for an Abu Dhabi-resident patient. It is concierge documentation for patients already in conversation with an infectious diseases specialist, with the confidentiality discipline that HIV care requires.

## Why Descovy, and why now

Descovy is the fixed-dose combination FTC 200 mg + TAF 25 mg, oral, once daily, from Gilead. It is the modern 2-NRTI backbone for HIV-1 treatment, successor to Truvada (FTC/TDF), with reduced renal and bone toxicity at equivalent antiviral activity. FDA approved for treatment April 2016 and for PrEP October 2019. The PrEP indication is restricted (cisgender men who have sex with men and transgender women per DISCOVER); cisgender women and others at risk from receptive vaginal sex should use Truvada for PrEP. EMA approved for treatment April 2016.

For TREATMENT, Descovy combines with a third agent (typically Biktarvy as the single-tablet co-formulation with bicitegravir, or Descovy plus dolutegravir as separate tablets). For PrEP, Descovy is taken alone, one tablet daily.

## What Descovy is, in plain language

Oral tablet, once daily, with or without food. Room-temperature storage. No infusion, no inpatient stay, no specialty-centre administration. Patient takes Descovy at home and returns for clinical follow-up and laboratory monitoring on the scheduled cadence.

For TREATMENT, the regimen is Descovy plus a third agent. For PrEP, one tablet daily for the duration of ongoing exposure risk.

## Eligibility at an Abu Dhabi infectious diseases clinic

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For HIV TREATMENT: confirmed HIV-1 diagnosis with viral load, CD4, resistance genotype; HBV and HCV serology; renal function (eGFR at or above 30 required); hepatic function; pregnancy screen; drug interaction review (avoid rifampin, carbamazepine, phenytoin, St John's wort); lipid panel; mental health and substance use screen; STI screen.

For PrEP: confirmed HIV-NEGATIVE status using 4th-generation Ag/Ab assay AND HIV-1 RNA PCR at baseline (the most important pre-PrEP gate); no acute HIV symptoms in preceding 28 days; HBV serology with vaccination if non-immune; STI screening; renal function; counselling on daily adherence and residual STI risk; confirmation that the PrEP-indicated exposure profile applies.

## The Abu Dhabi prescribing and dispense picture, plainly

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Descovy is EDE-registered. Abu Dhabi-emirate dispensing is coordinated through DoH for SEHA channels and through hospital pharmacy operations at the private prescribing centres.

1. **Prescribing infectious diseases specialist:** SEHA infectious diseases services at Sheikh Khalifa Medical City, Sheikh Shakhbout Medical City, Mafraq Hospital, and Tawam Hospital (Al Ain) handle the public-channel care for nationals and Thiqa-cover patients. Private-channel infectious diseases services at Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi, Burjeel Medical City, NMC Royal Hospital, and Mediclinic Airport Road handle commercial-cover and self-pay patients. Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi infectious diseases is also a cross-emirate referral destination for complex cases from across the UAE. 2. **Diagnostic workup:** HIV viral load, CD4, resistance genotype, HBV and HCV serology, baseline renal and hepatic panels, STI screen, lipid panel performed at the prescribing centre's laboratory or a partnered reference lab. All testing is confidential. 3. **Insurance and funding:** for Emirati nationals, HIV antiretroviral medication is funded through Thiqa with minimal or zero out-of-pocket cost. For residents, Daman commercial covers, employer-mandated health cover, and self-pay options apply. Confidentiality of insurance billing is handled by the prescribing centre's case management team. 4. **Pharmacy dispense:** prescribing centre's outpatient pharmacy. Community pharmacy dispense is uncommon because of the confidentiality framework. 5. **Refill cycle:** monthly or every 2 months, coordinated with the quarterly clinical review.

For PrEP in Abu Dhabi: PrEP prescribing is concentrated at the major infectious diseases services with the clinicians familiar with the indication. Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi infectious diseases has the most established PrEP-aware specialist roster among the private channels. Serodifferent-couple PrEP is the clearest pathway. Other indications discussed with the specialist on a patient-specific basis.

## The 2026 pathway, step by step

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Week 0 to 2: documentation pack with the patient's authorisation.

Week 2 to 4: first infectious diseases consultation; baseline workup; regimen choice or PrEP eligibility confirmation.

Week 4 to 5: first dispense at the prescribing centre.

Week 4 (TREATMENT): early monitoring visit.

Month 3 and month 6: clinical reviews.

Ongoing: 3-monthly to 6-monthly clinical reviews (TREATMENT); 3-monthly visits (PrEP).

## **Cost expectation in AED**

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US Descovy list price (2026) is approximately USD 2,150 to USD 2,400 per 30-day supply; annual approximately USD 25,800 to USD 28,800. At indicative 2026 cross rates, a 30-day Descovy supply at USD 2,200 is approximately AED 8,080, and the annual cost at USD 26,500 is approximately AED 97,300. For Emirati nationals funded through Thiqa, out-of-pocket cost for the medication itself is typically minimal or zero. The cash-pay band applies in private-channel cases without national programme support.

## **Monitoring on therapy**

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For HIV TREATMENT: viral load (4 weeks, then 3-monthly until durably suppressed, then 6-monthly), CD4 (baseline, 6-monthly until suppressed, then annually), renal function (baseline, 3 months, 6 months, then 6 to 12 monthly), HBV monitoring in coinfecting patients, lipid panel (baseline, 6 months, then annually), drug interaction review at each visit, mental health follow-up.

For PrEP: HIV testing every 3 months, STI screening every 3 months, renal function (baseline, 3 months, then 6-monthly), adherence and risk reassessment at each visit.

## **Religious, ethical, and family-logistics framing**

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Descovy is an oral small molecule with no animal-source material. Halal acceptability is not in question. The classical Islamic jurisprudential framework for treatment of serious illness endorses antiretroviral therapy. PrEP framing in Islamic ethical traditions is more nuanced and is a patient-specific clinical conversation.

HIV care in Abu Dhabi operates under a strict confidentiality framework across both SEHA and private channels. Reserve Meds operates with the same discipline; HIV-related case context is not disclosed to family members, employers, insurers, or any party other than the patient and the patient's named treating clinicians without explicit authorisation.

Modern HIV treatment in 2026 renders HIV a chronic condition with normal life expectancy. People living with HIV on suppressive treatment with undetectable viral load do not transmit sexually (U=U). For PrEP, serodifferent partnerships are a clinically standard and dignified indication. Mental health support is part of comprehensive HIV care. Cleveland Clinic Abu Dhabi's behavioural health service and the SEHA network mental health pathways are integrated or partnered with the infectious diseases services for HIV patients who would benefit.

## **When Descovy is not the right call**

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For TREATMENT: not for eGFR below 30, documented M184V/I or K65R resistance, or those on strong P-glycoprotein inducers. For PrEP: not for cisgender women and others at risk from receptive vaginal sex (use Truvada), not for anyone with undiagnosed HIV, not for anyone unable to commit to daily dosing and quarterly monitoring.

Alternatives include Biktarvy, Truvada-based regimens, Dovato, Cabenuva for stable suppressed patients, and Truvada for PrEP populations not indicated for Descovy.

## What Reserve Meds does on this case

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We are a US-based concierge coordinator. We are not the prescriber and not the dispensing pharmacy. On an Abu Dhabi Descovy case we build the documentation pack with the patient's explicit authorisation under the confidentiality discipline that HIV care requires, submit first-review requests to the chosen prescribing centre (SEHA or private), coordinate the Thiqa, Daman, or commercial funding conversation, set up the first dispense, organise the early monitoring schedule, and stay with the case through the first year with handoff to the local infectious diseases team. Clinical decisions remain with your treating infectious diseases specialist.

### *Reserve Meds's role*

US-based concierge coordinator for cross-border specialty medicine. We are not the prescriber, not the dispensing pharmacy, and not the manufacturer. All clinical decisions remain with your treating physician.

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### Reserve Meds

*reserved for you.*

Composite case examples. This document is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Please consult your treating physician.

Reserve Meds is in pre-launch. Published timelines and cost ranges are indicative, not guarantees.

reservemeds.com · hello@reservemeds.com