

DoxyPEP – the basics

DoxyPEP is a way of taking an antibiotic called doxycycline that can prevent you from getting syphilis and chlamydia. It should be taken *after* sex. It can prevent over three quarters of these two infections but is not 100% effective.

Most gonorrhoea in the UK is resistant to doxycycline, so DoxyPEP is unlikely to protect you against gonorrhoea.

DoxyPEP does not reduce the risk of catching other STIs such as HIV, Hepatitis B and C, warts, crabs and scabies. It is important to seek advice from your sexual health doctor or nurse if you get symptoms of an STI.

You should still have regular STI checks if you are having sex with new partners or sex without condoms.

When and how to take DoxyPEP

When to take it:

- If a condom isn't used for the entire time, take DoxyPEP as soon as possible and no later than 72 hours (3 days) after oral, anal/back or vaginal/front sex
- If you have sex again within 24 hours of taking DoxyPEP, take another dose 24 hours later (see diagram)
- Do not take more than 200mg (two pills) every 24 hours

How to take it:

- Take 200mg of doxycycline (two pills) with a large glass of water
- Do not lie down for at least 30 minutes after taking it, so that it does not get stuck when you swallow it
- If feel sick or get stomach pains after taking DoxyPEP, taking it with food can help
- Some people are more sensitive to the sun when they take doxycycline, so wear sunscreen with a high SPF and avoid using sunbeds
- Avoid antacids, or supplements containing aluminium, calcium, magnesium, zinc, iron or bismuth 2 hours before or after taking doxycycline

How can I get hold of DoxyPEP?

Most sexual health clinics in the UK can provide DoxyPEP for free. Some clinics offer a walk-in service and others offer appointments. Call your local clinic or check their website. You do not need to be referred by your GP.

Not everyone needs to take DoxyPEP. At the clinic, a doctor or nurse will assess you and help you decide if it is right for you.

Risks and Side Effects

Common side effects of DoxyPEP include feeling sick, headaches, stomach pains and heartburn. Doxycycline might increase the chance of developing yeast infections (thrush).

DoxyPEP is safe to use if you are living with HIV. It can be used in combination with your HIV treatment.

DoxyPEP does not affect contraceptives, hormone replacement therapy, or PrEP.

If you have concerns about side effects, speak to a sexual health doctor or nurse for advice.

When DoxyPEP should not be used

If you have an allergy to doxycycline or other tetracycline antibiotics.

Doxycycline can interact with some other medicines if they are taken at the same time. This can cause side effects or stop medicines from working properly. For example:

- Some other antibiotics such as rifampicin
- Isotretinoin, a treatment for acne
- Warfarin, a blood thinner
- Carbamazepine and phenytoin for epilepsy
- Ciclosporin, a medicine to suppress the immune system

Speak to a doctor or nurse for advice if you take any other drugs or medicines.

Pregnancy and DoxyPEP

Doxycycline may not be safe throughout the whole of pregnancy or breastfeeding. Talk to your doctor, nurse or midwife before taking DoxyPEP if you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant, or are breastfeeding.

What we are still learning about DoxyPEP

We do not know how effective DoxyPEP is for stopping STIs through vaginal or frontal sex.

We don't yet know if using DoxyPEP could make some bacteria that cause chest infections and skin infections develop antibiotic resistance. This could make these infections harder to treat in future.

We do not know how DoxyPEP might affect the balance of healthy bacteria in our bodies or how this might affect our health.

Further information

- The Love Tank "Little Backpocket Guide to DoxyPEP":
www.queerhealth.info/lbgt/doxy pep
- The Love Tank "DoxyPEP – the future of STI prevention?":
www.queerhealth.info/doxy pep

Notes

This leaflet was co-produced by The Love Tank CIC (www.thelovetank.info), Mitzi, Matt Harrison, and members of the British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) guideline writing group on behalf of the BASHH Clinical Effectiveness Group. The information in the leaflet is based on the 'BASHH UK national guideline for the use of doxycycline post-exposure prophylaxis (DoxyPEP) for the prevention of syphilis, 2025' published by BASHH and original resources created by The Love Tank CIC (see above). More information: www.bashh.org/guidelines.

The leaflet was developed following The Information Standard principles developed by NHS England. More information: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/tis/about/the-info-standard/>.

If you would like to comment on this leaflet, e-mail us at: admin@bashh.org.uk. Please type 'DoxyPEP PIL' in the subject box.

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HOW TO TAKE DOXY PEP

TAKE TWO 100mg PILLS OF DOXYCYCLINE IDEALLY WITHIN 24 HOURS BUT NO LATER THAN 72 HOURS AFTER CONDOMLESS ORAL, ANAL OR VAGINAL SEX

EXAMPLE ONE: IF THERE IS A NUMBER OF DAYS BETWEEN HAVING SEX



SEX ON SATURDAY: TAKE DOSE OF DOXY BY TUESDAY AT THE LATEST

SEX ON THURSDAY: TAKE DOSE OF DOXY BY SUNDAY AT THE LATEST

EXAMPLE TWO: IF THERE IS DAILY SEX OVER A NUMBER OF DAYS; TAKE A DAILY DOSE OF DOXY AND THEN THE LAST DOSE WITHIN 24-72 HOURS AFTER LAST SEX



DO NOT TAKE MORE THAN 200mg IN ANY 24 HOUR PERIOD