

Doxy-PEP

Everything you need to know!

What is Doxy-PEP?

Doxy-PEP is when you take an oral dose of the antibiotic doxycycline within 72 hours (3 days) of having sex to reduce your risk of getting syphilis and chlamydia. Doxycycline is a safe and common medication used to treat a range of conditions. Doxycycline has no interactions with HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), HIV medications (ARVs) or with gender affirming therapies (HRTs) making it safe to use if you take these medications. However, it is important to tell your doctor about other medications that you may be taking as they may interact with Doxy-PEP.

Doxy-PEP does not reduce the risk of acquiring HIV. If you are at risk of HIV, consider using PrEP for HIV and/or condoms

Testing regularly for STIs and HIV is important to protect your health and that of your partners.

Who is Doxy-PEP recommended for?

Currently, Doxy-PEP is recommended for use by gay and bisexual men, trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth who are at an increased risk of syphilis or chlamydia.

Doxy-PEP might be suitable for you if one or more of the following applies to you:

- You have received a diagnosis of early-stage syphilis within the last 24 months.
- You have received a diagnosis of other bacterial STIs such as chlamydia or gonorrhoea in the last 24 months.
- Are engaging in a lot of sex with different partners in short amount of time (such as at festivals, sex parties, chemsex or whilst on holidays)
- Are at higher risk for syphilis or chlamydia and are having sex with both men (cis) and women or partner/s with a uterus.

AND

- You have no contraindications to taking doxycycline
- You make an informed decision after considering risks and benefits of taking Doxy-PEP

If you are not in the recommended groups but think you could still benefit from Doxy-PEP, please speak with your GP or sexual health provider.

What protection can Doxy-PEP provide?

Doxy-PEP has been shown to reduce syphilis transmission by 70-80% and chlamydia transmission by 70-90%. As protection is not guaranteed, it's still important to get tested regularly. We recommend getting tested 4 times a year OR when you change partners OR if you experience symptoms OR if someone you have had sex with is diagnosed with an STI. Please consult with your GP or sexual health provider about the appropriate frequency for STI screening and testing based on your personal circumstances.

Doxy-PEP is not effective at providing protection from gonorrhoea and does not provide protection from viral infections such as HIV or herpes. People taking Doxy-PEP should also consider using other forms of protection such as PrEP for HIV and condoms.

How and when do I take Doxy-PEP?

Using Doxy-PEP is easy! Take two 100 mg tablets of doxycycline (total dose: 200 mg) within 48 to 72 hours after having sex. This includes oral, anal, vaginal or front hole sex.

So, if you had a big weekend with lots of sex, brilliant! Just take your Doxy-PEP on Monday morning with your breakfast. Don't forget though! For Doxy-PEP to be effective, you must take it within 72 hours (3 days) after sex.

Is Doxy-PEP right for me?

Doxy-PEP isn't going to be suitable for everyone and requires a prescription from your doctor to start.

Before prescribing Doxy-PEP your doctor will want to have an open conversation with you about why you would like to take it. They will also assess if Doxy-PEP would be suitable for you based on your personal risk factors. During this conversation your doctor will describe to you the potential pros and cons of starting Doxy-PEP, including explaining the common and potential side effects of Doxy-PEP as well as how to avoid these side effects.

If you and your doctor decide that Doxy-PEP is right for you, you will get a prescription with instructions on how to take it. You should not take more than 200 mg of Doxy-PEP once every 72 hours. Make sure you take the medication within 48 to 72 hours after your last sexual encounter.

Does Doxy-PEP have side effects?

Doxy-PEP can have side effects. These are typically uncommon and usually mild. Side effects can include headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, sun sensitivity and reflux but there are others. Doxy-PEP may also interact with some other medications, which is why it's important to have an open discussion with your doctor to determine if Doxy-PEP is right for you.

To avoid some of the side effects of Doxy-PEP it's important that you:

- Take Doxy-PEP with food and a full glass of water to prevent an upset stomach and potential damage to your throat.
- Avoid laying down (for 1 hour) after taking Doxy-PEP to avoid irritating your throat and stomach.
- Avoid taking antacids, iron, calcium, zinc or fibre supplements within 2 hours of taking Doxy-PEP as this can interfere with absorption of the medication.
- Wear sunscreen and sun protection when outside. Doxy-PEP increases your sensitivity to the sun causing you to experience sunburn more easily and can increase your chance of sunburn.

How much does it cost?

You may be prescribed a box of either 14 or 28 tablets of Doxycycline (100mg) which will generally cost less than \$25. This price is the same for people with Medicare and for those without Medicare.

Important to consider: Doxy-PEP concerns about antibiotic resistance and the microbiome

Like with any antibiotics, Doxy-PEP isn't suitable for everyone, and the overuse of Doxy-PEP may lead to increases in antibiotic resistance. This is why it's important to continue to monitor and access your suitability for Doxy-PEP regularly with your doctor.

To date, doxycycline is the only antibiotic demonstrated to be effective for syphilis and chlamydia.

Another concern that some may have is the effect of Doxy-PEP on the gut microbiome (healthy gut bacteria). To date, limited studies indicate that Doxy-PEP may not have much impact on the bacteria of the gut, however data are limited, and the long-term use of Doxy-PEP is unknown.

Resource created by:

