



# DoxyPEP

**This leaflet explains the benefits and risks of taking DoxyPEP (Doxycycline Post-Exposure Prophylaxis) – a pill taken after sex to help prevent chlamydia and syphilis.**

## What is DoxyPEP?

- 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 2 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
- Not everyone needs to take DoxyPEP. There are specific criteria which needs to be met before DoxyPEP is offered. At the clinic, a doctor or nurse will assess you and help you decide if it is right for you.

## 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)

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



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



Image courtesy of [www.bashh.org](http://www.bashh.org)

### **How to take it:**

- Take 200mg of doxycycline (2 x 100mg pills) within 24 hours of having sex, but no later than 72 hours after unprotected oral, anal/back or vaginal/front sex.
- Don't take more than 200mg (2 pills) in a 24-hour period.
- Take it with a big glass of water and some food to reduce the chance of side effects.
- Avoid dairy, antacids, and supplements with calcium, magnesium, or iron for 2 hours before or after your dose, as these can make it less effective.
- If you 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.

**You can take DoxyPEP as often as you need but follow the above instructions.**

### **Or...**

If you have sex multiple times in a 72 hour period, you may consider taking a single 200mg dose of Doxycycline at the end of the 72 hour period, rather than multiple doses to cover the entire period of risk.

### **Risks and side effects of taking DoxyPEP**

- Common side effects of DoxyPEP include feeling sick, headaches, stomach pains and heartburn.
- 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.

### **Who should not use DoxyPEP?**

- Those with 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 while 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](http://www.queerhealth.info/lbgt/doxy pep)

The Love Tank “DoxyPEP – the future of STI prevention?”: [www.queerhealth.info/doxy pep](http://www.queerhealth.info/doxy pep)

*Information taken from British Association for Sexual Health and HIV (BASHH) UK national guideline for the use of doxycycline post-exposure prophylaxis (DoxyPEP) for the prevention of syphilis, 2025*

## Contact details

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[www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/sexualhealth](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/sexualhealth)



To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

RBFT Florey Clinic, March 2026

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