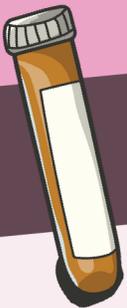


Doxy-PEP:

Medication to prevent syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea.

Doxy-PEP is a new sexual health strategy to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) other than HIV. By **taking a commonly used antibiotic called doxycycline after sex**, it can significantly reduce your chances of getting syphilis, chlamydia, and to a lesser extent gonorrhea.



How do I know if doxy-PEP is for me?

Current evidence only supports the use of doxy-PEP in people assigned male at birth who are gay, bi, queer men and/or trans women. **This may change in the future** as clinical trials are published with data on trans men, cisgender women, and other gender-diverse people.

Based on current evidence, you may find doxy-PEP particularly helpful if you were assigned male at birth and any of the following apply:

- You have had chlamydia, gonorrhea, and/or syphilis in the last 12 months;
- You have multiple sexual partners/engage in group sex (including oral sex), even if you haven't had a recent STI;
- You engage in "chemsex" (using stimulants during sex);
- You don't always use condoms;
- You are living with HIV;
- You are already taking HIV PrEP.

Doxy-PEP can safely be taken alongside medication to prevent or treat HIV. **Doxy-PEP does NOT protect against HIV.** To protect against HIV, check out [HIV PrEP](#).

How do I take doxy-PEP?



While some planning is required, taking doxy-PEP is often as simple as **3, 2, 1!**

Take it as soon as possible, **within 3 days after sex**. The sooner you can take doxy-PEP after sex, the better!



Take **2 pills**, or **200 mg**, of doxycycline.

Take it only **once per day** (24 hour period).



If sex continues over 2–3 days, take another dose (**2 pills**, or **200 mg**) as soon as possible after the time you have sex, at least 24 hours after your last dose.

Do not take doxy-PEP more than 3 times (3 doses) per week.



How effective is doxy-PEP?

Doxy-PEP **greatly reduces** the likelihood of getting syphilis, chlamydia, and to a lesser extent gonorrhea. In one recent study, doxy-PEP reduced the chances of getting syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea (among those also taking HIV PrEP) by 87%, 88%, and 55% respectively¹. While doxy-PEP doesn't prevent these infections every time, it is very effective for individuals and our community to protect our sexual health and lower STI rates.

Another strategy that is being investigated is doxy-PrEP, which is where one pill of doxycycline is taken daily. Research is currently underway to determine how well doxy-PrEP works as a prevention strategy.

¹ PLuetkemeyer AF, Donnell D, Dombrowski JC, Cohen S, Grabow C, Brown CE, et al. Postexposure Doxycycline to Prevent Bacterial Sexually Transmitted Infections. *N Engl J Med.*2023;388(14):1296–1306. doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa2211934. available at <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2211934>

Are there any risks or side effects to taking doxy-PEP?



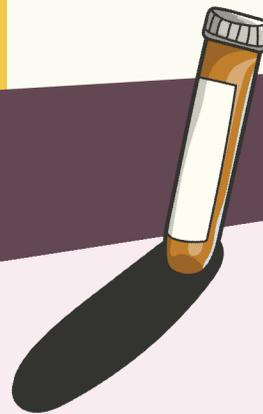
All medications have risks (e.g. side effects) and benefits. The benefit of doxy-PEP is to lower the likelihood of acquiring syphilis, chlamydia, and to a lesser extent gonorrhea. Doxy-PEP is generally well tolerated, but possible side effects include:

- Nausea, irritation of the esophagus (burning or sore feeling in your throat or chest), or diarrhea
- Sensitivity to the sun
- Mild digestive discomfort
- Allergic reaction or rash
- Rare but serious side effects include severe headaches or vision changes.

If you experience these, contact your healthcare provider right away. If symptoms persist or get worse, seek immediate medical attention. Checking in with your healthcare provider regularly can help manage any side effects you may encounter.

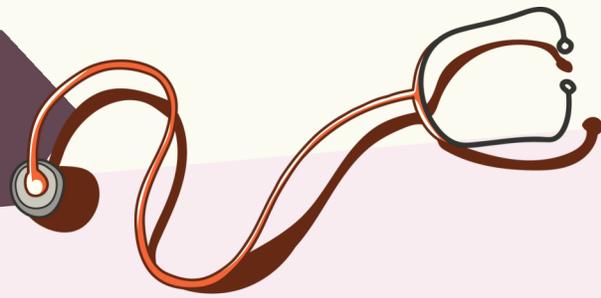
Remember: Reduce side effects like nausea by taking doxy-PEP with food and water, and staying upright for 30 minutes after taking it. Wearing sunscreen or avoiding extended time in the sun will help avoid skin irritation.

Notes on antibiotics:



- As doxycycline is an antibiotic, there is always a concern about potential drug resistance. **Doxycycline is commonly prescribed** in the treatment of acne and non-STI bacterial infections as well as the prevention of malaria. **To date, there is no evidence of doxycycline resistance in syphilis or chlamydia.**
- All antibiotics can cause a *C. difficile* infection (a severe infection of the gastrointestinal tract); however, **doxycycline is less likely to cause a *C. difficile* infection.**
- **Antibiotics can sometimes lead to yeast infections**, especially in those prone to them.

Talking to healthcare providers



When it comes to doxy-PEP, **some providers may be unfamiliar with doxy-PEP or hesitant to prescribe it.** While advocating for your needs during these conversations can feel uncomfortable, it's helpful to remember that providers have to ask some personal questions about sexual health. They may ask about partners, practices, and STI history to assess risks and benefits and help you make informed decisions.

Being prepared to explain why doxy-PEP could benefit you and addressing concerns can make the conversation more productive and less daunting.

Your healthcare provider does not think you are at risk for STIs.

Possible response: If you have sex outside of mutually monogamous sexual partner(s), you are at risk for acquiring an STI. Remind your healthcare provider that doxy-PEP is just another tool to protect yourself against STIs and can also lower anxiety related to sexual health. This is especially true, as syphilis, chlamydia, and gonorrhea are on the rise among 2S/GTBQ+ people. If they are also concerned about antibiotic resistance, because you are not sexually active often, then you will only rarely take this medication.



Your healthcare provider is unfamiliar with doxy-PEP or its effectiveness.

Possible response: Give them the 'For Healthcare Providers' section of this guide!

Tip: Advocating for your sexual health doesn't mean having to do it solo. If you're worried about talking to a healthcare provider, **you can always bring a friend or loved one for moral support.** Check out [The Care I Want](#), an illustrated guide to navigating healthcare, more self-advocacy tips.



Your healthcare provider is worried about antibiotic resistance.

Possible response: Healthcare providers need to consider antibiotic resistance before prescribing antibiotics (like doxycycline). However, with doxycycline in particular, antibiotic resistance has not been observed in syphilis or chlamydia. Gonorrhea is often already resistant due to high resistance to tetracyclines. More information is available in the 'Information for Healthcare Providers' section.



Your healthcare provider thinks prescribing doxy-PEP will motivate you to stop using condoms.

Possible response: Using a condom or not is a personal choice. The more STI prevention options people have, the easier it is for them to find options that work for them. Doxy-PEP can be used as a complementary strategy and is not meant to replace condoms for everyone. Regardless of condom use, doxy-PEP is emerging as another effective prevention option for bacterial STIs.



Tip: Keep your doxy-PEP where you will remember to take it, such as on your nightstand or with your sex prep supplies. If you take HIV medications or HIV PrEP, keep your doxy-PEP near it as a reminder that it's there when you need it.



Get Support

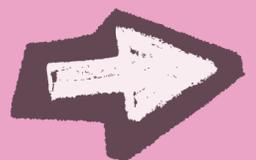
Open and supportive discussions about our sexual health helps reduce stigma and encourage testing, especially in 2S/LGBTQIA+ communities.

Visit www.cbrc.net/albertasyphilis for a list of available clinical and community-based supports. With the right tools and support you can keep yourself and those you love safer and healthier.



Next page: Information for healthcare providers

Share this section of the guide with your healthcare provider when you talk about doxy-PEP.



Information for healthcare providers:



2025 Update:

See new recommendations on the use of prophylactic doxycycline for the prevention of bacterial STIs (chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis) here:



Doxy-PEP as a pharmacological prevention of bacterial STIs:

Recent clinical trials demonstrate that doxycycline post-exposure prophylaxis (doxy-PEP) is effective in preventing syphilis, chlamydia and to a lesser extent gonorrhea in cisgender (assigned male at birth) gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM), as well as transgender women. In one recent study, doxy-PEP reduced the chances of getting syphilis, chlamydia, and, to a lesser extent, gonorrhea (among those also taking HIV PrEP) by 87%, 88%, and 55% respectively².



“

Doxy-PEP is an evidence based prevention strategy for sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia and syphilis. In a landmark clinical trial, regular use of doxy-PEP reduced the risk of these infections by about 80%. This prevention strategy has been endorsed by the US CDC and is supported as a public program in BC for GbMSM on HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) or living with HIV. **All sexually active gbMSM should be assessed for both HIV PrEP and doxy-PEP eligibility.**”

”

– Dr. Mark Hull, Research Scientist, BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS and Clinical Assistant Professor, UBC

Assessing indication for doxy-PEP

- Chlamydia, gonorrhea, and/or syphilis in the last 12 months;
- Multiple sexual partners (including oral sex) or intention to have multiple sex partners, even without a recent STI;
- Inconsistent or no condom use;
- Living with HIV;
- Prescribed HIV PrEP;
- Additional factors based on shared decision making.



Prescription and monitoring:

Prescribing doxycycline as prophylaxis for syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhea:

- Doxy-PEP consists of a 200 mg dose of doxycycline taken within 72 hours following a sexual exposure. It is well tolerated with potential gastrointestinal side effects and possible risk for photosensitivity. Recommend to sit upright 30 minutes after taking medication and use sunscreen for skin protection.
- A recommended prescription would be: Doxycycline 100 mg PO, take 2 capsules within 72 hours of sex, max 1 dose per day. Mitte: 30. Consider providing an appropriate amount of refills if the client is expecting to use the entire prescription before your next regular appointment with them (e.g. 3 month STI screening).

Clinical follow-up while on doxy-PEP should include:

- Baseline and regular screening (e.g. quarterly STI testing)
- Assessment and mitigation of HIV risk for those who are HIV-negative (e.g., provision of HIV PrEP) and monitoring/treatment for those who are living with HIV
- Counselling around potential side effects, dosing, and drug interactions
- Pregnancy testing as indicated for people with a uterus
- Monitoring during use (e.g. periodic routine bloodwork including complete blood count, renal and liver function tests).

Additional consideration:

Offer doxy-PEP as part of a comprehensive sexual health strategy, and support patients to make informed decisions about the full spectrum of prevention options available to them including alternatives to doxy-PEP (e.g., condom use), STI testing and treatment, HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and emergency post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), HIV and HCV testing, HIV treatment for people living with HIV, and STI vaccines (e.g., human papillomavirus, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and mpox).

Learn more about doxy-PEP, including clinical trial results and comments on antimicrobial resistance, in a recent position paper³ from The British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, and an evidence summary⁴ produced by the Ontario HIV Treatment Network. [Access training on doxy-PEP here:](#)



3 British Columbia Centre for Disease Control. 2023. BCCDC Position Statement on Doxycycline as Prophylaxis for Sexually Transmitted Infections. available at: <https://smartsexresource.com/for-health-providers/sti-updates/2023/11/the-bccdc-position-statement-on-doxycycline-as-prophylaxis-for-sexually-transmitted-infections/>

4 Rapid Response Service. Doxycycline prophylaxis for the prevention of bacterial sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Toronto, ON: The Ontario HIV Treatment Network; March 2023. available at <https://www.ohntn.on.ca/rapid-response-doxycycline-prophylaxis-for-the-prevention-of-bacterial-sexually-transmitted-infections>.