

Follow up

It is important to regularly test for STIs while taking doxyPEP.

Your healthcare provider will discuss a follow up plan for you which will include when to test for syphilis, chlamydia and gonorrhoea. They will also discuss other things that you can do for your sexual health. They will also assess your need for doxyPEP on an ongoing basis.

If you have sexual contact with someone with syphilis, you should contact your sexual health service to discuss testing and the need for treatment.

If you develop symptoms of an STI you should contact your sexual health service as soon as possible. If you have symptoms of an STI it is important to avoid having sex.

Other considerations

Antibiotic exposure and resistance

Some potential risks of doxyPEP are not yet fully understood.

This includes its possible contribution to antimicrobial resistance in STIs and other bacteria. Antimicrobial resistance is when bacteria become resistant to antibiotics, making infections harder to treat.

Taking antibiotics, including doxyPEP, may also have a negative effect on your microbiome. The microbiome is the bacteria that naturally live in and on your body and help protect your health.

Taking doxyPEP may increase the total amount of antibiotics you use. For example, if you took one dose of doxyPEP every week for 3 months, that would be a total of 26 capsules of doxycycline.

That is almost twice the amount that would be used to treat one episode of chlamydia (14 capsules).

Each capsule = 100mg

**One
chlamydia
treatment
(14 capsules)**



**Example:
DoxyPEP
taken once
a week for 3
months
(26 capsules)**



Taking more antibiotics may increase the risk of antibiotic resistance and antibiotic related side effects.

What else can I do to protect my sexual health?

In addition to doxyPEP, there are many ways STIs can be prevented such as:

- Correct and consistent use of condoms (available for free in Ireland)
- Vaccination for hepatitis A & B, HPV and Mpox
- Using PrEP or PEP to prevent HIV

You can order more copies of this leaflet free of charge from www.healthpromotion.ie

Produced by the HSE Sexual Health Programme

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DoxyPEP
(Doxycycline post -
exposure prophylaxis)



sexualwellbeing.ie



What is doxyPEP?

- Doxy stands for doxycycline (an antibiotic)
- PEP stands for post - exposure prophylaxis

DoxyPEP is the use of an antibiotic called doxycycline after sex to reduce the likelihood of some sexually transmitted infections (STIs). DoxyPEP can prevent around 80% of syphilis and chlamydia infections but is not 100% effective. DoxyPEP is unlikely to prevent gonorrhoea infection. DoxyPEP does not protect against HIV.

So far, most of the evidence on the effectiveness of doxyPEP is in gay, bisexual and other men or trans women who have sex with men. We do not know how effective doxyPEP is in preventing syphilis and chlamydia through vaginal or frontal sex.

There is no evidence that the use of other antibiotics prevents STIs. If you have symptoms of an STI you should attend your sexual health service or GP.

Who might benefit from doxyPEP?

It is recommended that gay, bisexual and other men or trans women who have sex with men, who are considered at increased risk of syphilis infection are informed of the benefits of doxyPEP in preventing syphilis.

Individuals who may be at increased risk of acquiring syphilis include those who:

- have had a bacterial STI in the past 12 months
- have had multiple or new sexual partners in the past 12 months
- take part in group-sex or chemsex

The decision to prescribe doxyPEP will be a shared decision between you and your healthcare provider, balancing the benefits, risks and the unknowns.

DoxyPEP may be considered for other people at risk of syphilis infection, this will be decided on a case by case basis.

You cannot take doxyPEP if you are allergic to doxycycline.

Getting doxyPEP in Ireland

In Ireland, it is recommended that doxyPEP care is provided in public sexual health services and through HSE approved PrEP providers.

If you decide with your healthcare provider that doxyPEP is right for you, you will be given a prescription for doxycycline that you can bring to your community pharmacy.

In Ireland, it is illegal for a person to source prescription medication without a prescription, and is illegal to source prescription medication by mail order, including over the internet. The Health Products Regulation Authority (HPRA) provide information for the public on the risks of buying medicines online.

<https://www.hpra.ie/safety-information/how-we-monitor-safety/medicines/dangers-of-buying-prescription-medicines-online>

Drug interactions and side effects

Doxycycline can interact with other medications, including: phenytoin, carbamazepine, cyclosporine and vitamin A derivatives (eg retinoids such as Roaccutane).

Do not start doxyPEP until you have discussed your medications with your healthcare provider, especially if you are on treatment for acne, epilepsy, take warfarin or take medications that lower the immune system (immunosuppressive medications).

If you are taking medicines, including over the counter medicines, that, for example contain aluminium, magnesium or calcium you should not take them at the same time. This is because they can reduce the effectiveness of doxycycline. It's best to leave at least 2 hours between taking them to make sure the doxyPEP works properly.

Heavy alcohol use can decrease the effectiveness of doxycycline.

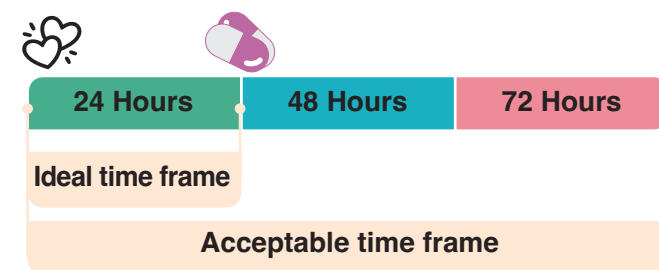
Side effects of doxycycline may include:

- headache
- nausea
- vomiting
- acid reflux
- increased sensitivity to sunlight that may cause a rash (photosensitivity)

If your healthcare provider is prescribing medication for you it is important to tell them that you are taking doxycycline to avoid drug - drug interactions.

How to take doxyPEP?

Take 200mg of doxycycline (2 capsules of 100mg each), ideally within 24 hours and no later than 72 hours after oral or anal sex.



You should not take more than 200mg of doxycycline within 24 hours.

If you have sex more than once in a 72 hour period, consider taking 200mg of doxycycline at the end of 72 hours.



It is best to take doxyPEP with a full glass of water, and not lie flat for 30 minutes after taking it.

You should wear high factor sunscreen and avoid sun beds while taking doxycycline. This will reduce the risk of getting a photosensitivity reaction.