

What is DoxyPEP?

Doxy-PEP involves taking a single dose of the antibiotic doxycycline shortly after condomless sexual contact to reduce the risk of acquiring certain bacterial STIs. This is an emerging approach to reduce the risk of certain bacterial STIs, specifically syphilis and chlamydia, after sexual exposure. It is however not effective to prevent gonorrhoea.

Who Should Consider taking DoxyPEP?

DoxyPEP, based on the population they are studied in, may be discussed for the following groups at risk of bacterial STIs:

- Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM), and transgender women with a history of at least a bacterial STI (such as syphilis, chlamydia, or gonorrhea) during the past 12 months, or will be participating in sexual activities that are known to increase the likelihood of exposure to STIs e.g. unprotected oral, neo-vaginal or anal intercourse with casual partners.
- MSM and TGW on HIV PrEP who have reduced condom use.

Consultation with your clinician is essential to determine if DoxyPEP is appropriate for you.

How Does It Work?

The typical DoxyPEP regimen involves:

- Taking 200 mg of doxycycline within 72 hours of condomless sex (oral, neo-vaginal or anal sex).

- Doxycycline usually comes in 100 mg capsules; therefore, you will need to take 2 capsules.
- Don't take more than one dose of doxycycline in a 24-hour period. However, you can take doxyPEP as often as every day if you need.

How to Take the Dose:

- Swallow the doxycycline capsule with a full glass of water (approximately 240 ml).
- To minimize the risk of gastrointestinal irritation or ulcers in the esophagus, avoid lying down immediately after taking the medication. Stay upright (sitting or standing) for 30 minutes to 1 hour.
- Taking the medication after food may reduce the chance of gastrointestinal irritation.
- Do not take doxycycline within two hours of having any dairy products, antacids and supplements with iron, calcium, or magnesium.

Effectiveness and Considerations

Clinical studies have shown DoxyPEP can reduce the incidence of chlamydia and syphilis by 70–80% among high-risk populations. However:

- It is not effective against viral infections such as HIV or herpes or Mpox.
- It is not effective against gonorrhoea.
- DoxyPEP is a relatively new prevention strategy, its impact on the body's natural microbiome and the potential for antibiotic resistance are still being studied, so its use should be carefully considered in consultation with your doctor.

Side Effects

Possible side effects include:

- Gastrointestinal discomfort (e.g., nausea, diarrhea).
- Sensitivity to sunlight (photosensitivity).
- Yeast infections in some individuals.
- Allergic reactions

Let your doctor know if you experience side effects or if you have allergies to tetracycline antibiotics.

Complementary Prevention Strategies

While DoxyPEP may reduce the risk of bacterial STIs, it is not a standalone prevention tool. DSC Clinic also recommends:

- Regular STI/HIV screenings.
- Consistent use of condoms.
- PrEP for HIV prevention.
- Open communication with sexual partners about STI prevention.

Book an Appointment

If you would like to learn more about Doxy-PEP to see if it is suitable for you schedule a consultation with the DSC Clinic:

- Phone: 6293 9648
- Online: <https://www.nsc.com.sg/dsc/e-Services/Pages/Book-an-Appointment.aspx>

Doxycycline Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (DoxyPEP)