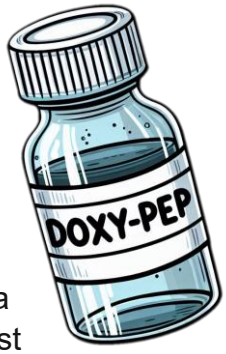
DoxyPEP – how and when to take it

What is DoxyPEP?



DoxyPEP means taking the antibiotic doxycycline after sex to prevent getting certain sexually transmitted infections (STIs). It's like a morning-after pill but for STIs.

It's highly effective at preventing syphilis and chlamydia. It can prevent over three quarters of these two infections but is not 100% effective. Most gonorrhoea in the UK is resistant to doxycycline so DoxyPEP is unlikely to protect you against gonorrhoea.

When to take it

Take two 100 mg pills of doxycycline as soon as possible after condomless sex but no later than 72 hours after. Condomless sex means sex where a condom isn't used for the entire time.

If you have sex again within 24 hours of taking doxycycline, take another dose 24 hours after your last dose. You can take doxycycline as often as every day when you're having condomless sex.

Do not take more than 200 mg (two 100 mg pills) every 24 hours.

We do not have the evidence to tell us if the effectiveness of DoxyPEP changes depending on when it's taken in the 72 hours after sex.

If you're having sex on more than one occasion over a 72 hour period, you may consider taking a single 200 mg dose of doxycycline at the end of the 72 hour period, instead of multiple doses, to cover the entire period of sex.

How to take it

Take doxycycline with plenty of fluids.

Do not lie down for at least 30 minutes after taking it, so that it does not get stuck when you swallow.

If doxycycline upsets your stomach, taking it with food may help.

Some people are more sensitive to the sun when they take doxycycline. Wear sunscreen with a high SPF and avoid using sunbeds.

You should avoid the following 2 hours before OR after taking doxycycline:

- antacids
- supplements containing aluminium
- calcium
- magnesium
- zinc
- iron or bismuth

You should avoid the following 2 hours before AND after taking doxycycline:

- calcium
- magnesium
- antacids
- multivitamins.

Will DoxyPEP increase doxycycline resistance in bacteria that cause STIs?

Although doxycycline has been used for decades, there isn't resistance to doxycycline in chlamydia or syphilis.

About 80% of gonorrhoea in the UK is already resistant to doxycycline. This percent is increasing over time. DoxyPEP will not work against these strains.

Does it affect normal ('good') bacteria in our intestines?

We don't know how DoxyPEP might affect the balance of healthy bacteria in our bodies or how this might affect our health.

Could it increase or decrease the bacteria that live on our skin, or make them resistant to doxycycline (for example, staph)?

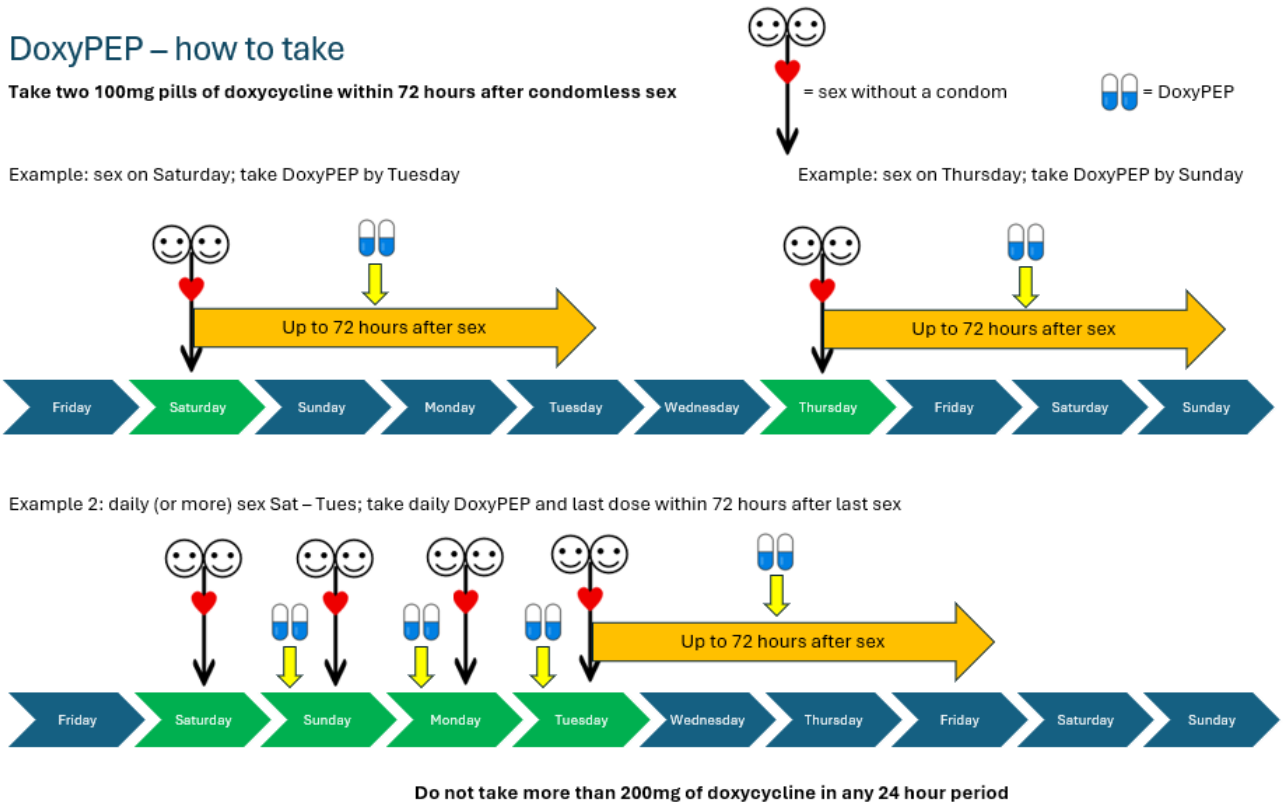
We do not know yet know if using DoxyPEP could make some bacteria that cause chest infections and skin infections develop antibiotic resistance. This could make these infections harder to treat in future.

Reminders

You must get tested for STIs every 3 months.

DoxyPEP doesn't protect against mpox, HIV, or other viral infections. Condoms, HIV PrEP and vaccines can help protect against some of these.

Diagram showing how to take DoxyPep



Contact us

Attend a walk-in clinic or call us on **0300 303 2880** if:

- you're having side effects
- you think you may have an STI.

Visit our website for clinic opening times.

About this patient information

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention and control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention and control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

Patient advice sheet

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email bht.pals@nhs.net