

FREE DoxyPEP for Leeds sex working women

Syphilis is passed through sex. Doxycycline antibiotic tablets can **reduce the risk of Syphilis & Chlamydia** in men **by over 70%**; it should work if women can take it **at least once per week**

You need to take **2 x 100mg tablets AT LEAST once per week** (ideally every 72 hours)

It can cut your chance of being infected with syphilis & chlamydia

It **does not protect you 100%**, and **doesn't work against gonorrhoea** (take the **Bexsero vaccine** to reduce gonorrhoea risk)

It's **safe** – it is already used to prevent some health conditions

Possible side effects: tummy upset, skin rash in direct sun

Don't have if:

- you are beyond 15 weeks pregnant unless agreed with your Dr
- At the same time as heartburn meds

Speak to your Dr/nurse if you need medicines for other infections or health conditions
Other vaccines/medicines can be given at the same time

Call **0113 843 4495** or speak to your sexual health nurse

Doxycycline for Syphilis prevention

Frequently Asked Questions

What is syphilis and why does it matter?

- A sexually-transmitted infection which is rising, including in Leeds amongst sex working women
- Passed on by sex without a condom when having vaginal, anal or oral sex
- You can test for it by having a swab from a sore or blood test
- Even if an infected person has no symptoms the infection can still be passed on.
- There may be no symptoms at all, or might be sores or rashes and swollen glands
- Infection may also cause:
 - Eye, nerve, heart and liver problems
 - pregnancy problems and infection in the baby

What is DoxyPEP & how do I take it?

- 2 tablets of Doxycycline antibiotic taken within 24-72 hours of condomless sex to reduce the risk of syphilis and chlamydia
- Take it at least ONCE per week – even better if every 72 hours.

What does up to 70% reduction in men but unknown in women mean?

- There's good evidence of it reducing the chance of becoming infected with syphilis or chlamydia in men who have sex with men. But the evidence in women is mixed – mostly we think because women need support to take it regularly. If we can support you to take it regularly if you're not always using condoms or had Syphilis or STIs within the last year we think it could reduce your risk.
- It's really important to keep testing for STIs regularly as it doesn't work 100% in anyone and can't protect you from all STIs including gonorrhoea (the Bexsero vaccine reduces this 30-40%), scabies, crabs, warts, herpes or other blood infections like HIV or hepatitis.

If I'm using drugs or homeless how do I get a regular supply?

- The syphilis outbreak is affecting you the most. So we really want to try and support you through explaining what DoxyPEP is then offering to store your meds at multiple access points around the city that you trust like Basis, near Joanna project with the Bevan van, via Forward Leeds or Leeds Sexual health outreach teams, or at your pharmacy.
- You need to take 2 x 100mg Doxy tablets per week AT LEAST ONCE.
- TELL US IF YOU'RE TAKING YOUR LAST PILLS OR YOUR BOX IS EMPTY. We'll top up.

Is it free?

- Yes!

Does it have any side-effects?

- Take doxycycline with plenty of water or something else to drink so that it does not get stuck when you swallow. If your stomach is upset by doxycycline, taking it with food may help
- Some people are more sensitive to the sun when they take doxycycline, so wear sunscreen
- Avoid dairy products, calcium, antacids or multivitamins within 2 hours before or after doxy

Any other risks?

- Doxycycline has been used for decades to treat syphilis and chlamydia and we have not seen these infections develop any resistance to doxycycline.
- People have taken doxycycline safely longterm for acne and malaria for many years. We do not know yet if doxyPEP might affect normal/good bacteria in our bodies or if other bacteria might become resistant to doxycycline.

Will it work if I already have syphilis?

- If you have syphilis its important this gets treated properly ideally with a penicillin injection, but doxyPEP can help prevent you getting it again

Does having syphilis infection make me immune?

- No, and that's why you can get infected with syphilis more than once

Is it safe in pregnancy and breastfeeding?

- Guidance advises we can use if you are at risk up to 15 weeks of pregnancy, but if you are or suspect you may be pregnant, it is important to be aware that tetracyclines (the class of antibiotics that doxycycline belongs to) can have risks during pregnancy, including impact on the bone and teeth development of the baby.
- Doxycycline binds less to calcium than tetracycline and has been shown not to cause the same tooth staining. Studies also show a lack of staining with doxycycline to permanent teeth when given to children under 8 years. But we would still advise you discuss with your Doctor to make sure it's the right thing for you.

Does it affect fertility?

- There is no known effect on getting pregnant or fertility