

Be Prepared for Conversations About “Doxy PEP”

You'll hear buzz about “doxy PEP”...to prevent bacterial sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

That's because CDC now recommends prescribing doxycycline for certain high-risk patients to take after sex as POSTexposure prophylaxis (PEP).

Evidence suggests that doxy PEP prevents a new bacterial STI in about 1 in 3 patients per year.

Be aware, these data are in men who have sex with men (MSM) or transgender women (TGW)...with a prior bacterial STI in the past year.

It's too soon to say if doxy PEP is effective for other patients...or if other antibiotics work.

Keep in mind, the jury's still out over whether this new recommendation will increase antimicrobial resistance. But doxy PEP should reduce overall antibiotic prescribing for STI treatment.

Offer doxy PEP to MSM or TGW...with syphilis, chlamydia, or gonorrhea in the past year.

Also discuss doxy PEP with other MSM or TGW patients with risks for STI exposure...unprotected sex, multiple partners, etc.

In these cases, prescribe any immediate-release form of oral doxycycline 200 mg for patients to have on hand.

Educate them to take a single 200 mg dose...as soon as possible within 72 hours after having oral, vaginal, or anal sex.

Emphasize to limit to 1 dose in 24 hours, even if having sex more frequently.

Think of doxy PEP as part of your conversation about overall sexual health...along with HIV PrEP and PEP.

And reinforce that doxy PEP does NOT replace safer sex practices...condom use, reducing the number of sex partners, proper screening, etc.

Write for the number of doses aligning with anticipated sexual activity until the next visit. Reassess therapy every 3 to 6 months...along with HIV, syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia screening.

Advise patients to take doxycycline with plenty of water and food in their stomach...and to stay upright for at least 30 minutes afterward. But counsel not to take it within 2 hours of dairy, antacids, or supplements with calcium, iron, or magnesium.

Be aware, doxycycline does not interact with hormonal therapies or antiretroviral medications.

Key References:

- Bachmann LH, Barbee LA, Chan P, et al. CDC Clinical Guidelines on the Use of Doxycycline Postexposure Prophylaxis for Bacterial Sexually Transmitted Infection Prevention, United States, 2024. MMWR Recomm Rep. 2024 Jun 6;73(No. RR-2):1-8.
- Traeger MW, Mayer KH, Krakower DS, et al. Potential impact of doxycycline post-exposure prophylaxis prescribing strategies on incidence of bacterial sexually transmitted infections. Clin Infect Dis. 2023 Aug 18:ciad488. doi: 10.1093/cid/ciad488.

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