

What You Need to Know about Doxycycline for Prevention of Anthrax

You are being given a medicine called **doxycycline** (sounds like DOCKS-ee-SY-cleen) because you **may** have breathed in anthrax germs. These germs can be **deadly**. Taking this drug reduces your chance of getting sick and dying. Until officials know for sure who breathed in the germs, it is important to start taking this medicine now. People who may have breathed in anthrax should take the medicine for 60 days. If you do not have enough for 60 days, public health officials will tell you whether you need more and how to get it.

Taking this drug is your choice. If you can, talk to your doctor or health care provider about taking doxycycline.

What is anthrax?

Anthrax is a serious disease that can be deadly. You can get sick if you breathe in the anthrax germs. You cannot get anthrax from another person.

- The first signs or symptoms may seem like a cold or the flu (such as a mild fever and muscle aches).
- Later signs or symptoms may be a cough, chest discomfort, shortness of breath, tiredness, and muscle aches.

Symptoms usually start within 7 days of breathing in **anthrax germs**, but can up to 42 days to appear. See a doctor right away if you have symptoms. If you take doxycycline as directed **and begin to feel sick anyway, get medical care right away.**

What is doxycycline?

Doxycycline is a prescription medicine approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prevent anthrax. FDA has allowed certain uses of doxycycline, including its use with no prescription, for this emergency. Do not be alarmed if the medicine you receive from public health officials has an expired date on the package. FDA has authorized its use because testing of the medicine found it safe to use past the expiration.



- Doxycycline may not work as well when taken with some medicines. Take it 2 hours before or 2 hours after taking:
 - Antacids
 - Sucralfate (Carafate)
 - Colestipol (Colestid)
 - Didanosine
 - Cholestyramine
 - Multivitamins or supplements with calcium, iron, magnesium, or sodium bicarbonate
 - Bismuth subsalicylate (Helidac, Pepto Bismol, Kaopectate, or other products for indigestion, nausea, or diarrhea)
- If you get an upset stomach when you take the medicine, take it with food or milk.
- If you miss a pill, take only your next pill at the time you are supposed to – **Do not take 2 pills at once.**
- Talk to your doctor if you are on blood thinners or seizure medicines. Doxycycline may affect how much of these medicines you need.
- Keep the pills dry. Store them at room temperature (between 68–77°F or 20–25°C).
- Keep pill bottles away from children and pets. Call the poison center if they take the medicine by accident (1-800-222-1222).

Who should NOT take doxycycline?

Do not take doxycycline if you have had a severe allergic reaction to doxycycline or another tetracycline drug. A severe reaction may include swelling of the tongue, hands, feet, closing of throat, or trouble breathing.

STOP taking this medicine if you get any of these serious, but rare, side effects. Get medical help right away (go to the emergency room or call 911).

- swelling of the tongue, hands, or feet
- closing of the throat or trouble breathing
- severe itching or rash, especially hives and wheals
- severe stomach cramps with high fever or bloody diarrhea
- yellowing of the eyes or skin or dark-colored urine
- pain when swallowing
- unusual bleeding or bruising
- severe headaches, dizziness, or double vision

Keep taking the medicine if you have:

- vaginal yeast infection
- mild nausea or vomiting, upset stomach, loose stools

Are there other possible severe side effects?

- Serious liver problems (liver failure)
- Sensitivity to the sun
- Slowed bone growth in children
- Discolored teeth or poor tooth enamel in children younger than 8 years and in children whose mothers took doxycycline during the last half of pregnancy or while nursing
- Birth control pills stop working. Use another form of birth control until you finish taking all of your doxycycline

Are there any other medications that I can take instead of doxycycline?

Public health officials will tell you if other medications are available. The risks and benefits of those medications will be explained separately.

How do I report side effects or medication errors?

Tell your doctor right away and report side effects or medication errors to MedWatch at www.fda.gov/medwatch or 1-800-FDA-1088.

Is there anything that is not known about the emergency use of doxycycline?

The benefit of providing emergency access to doxycycline is expected to outweigh the risks. The impact of using the medicine without a prescription, or how well these instructions will be followed, is unknown.

