

## Doxycycline Information Sheet for First Responders: Option to Purchase Antibiotics for Anthrax Preparedness

***Do not take this doxycycline unless you have been told to start  
by a public health official.***

### What is doxycycline?

Doxycycline is a prescription drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prevent anthrax.

### What is anthrax?

Anthrax is a serious disease caused by the germ *Bacillus anthracis*. People who breathe in (inhale) anthrax germs are at risk of serious illness, including possible death. You cannot get anthrax from another person.

- First symptoms are cold-like or flu-like symptoms, such as mild fever and muscle aches.
- Later symptoms are cough, chest discomfort, shortness of breath, tiredness, and muscle aches.

Symptoms usually occur within 7 days of inhaling anthrax germs, but can take up to 6 weeks to appear. See a doctor immediately if you have symptoms.

### What is the nature of this voluntary activity?

- As a first responder, you will likely be requested to immediately assist your community during a response to an anthrax attack. You can choose to obtain a prescription for doxycycline from your health care professional and then purchase your own 10-day supply of doxycycline before an actual anthrax emergency and keep it in your home to begin taking when instructed by a public health official if an actual anthrax emergency occurs. Other members of your community and family will be receiving similar antibiotics, but will be obtaining those medicines at a slightly later point from public points of dispensing (PODs) that will be set up by your local government. The voluntary purchase and storing of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) antibiotics is intended to prevent delays so you can be available to help your community in the crisis response to an anthrax attack.
- The full doxycycline course for prevention of anthrax is 60 days. This advanced prescription option will cover only the first 10 days of that treatment course, and therefore you will need to obtain the additional 50-day supply. This additional supply will most likely be provided by your state or local public health response partners. Public health officials will announce where to get the rest of the medicine during an anthrax emergency.

### How and when do I take doxycycline?

- Doxycycline should ONLY be used for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) following anthrax exposure and this prescription should NOT be used at other times to treat any other conditions.
- You will be instructed by public health officials when to begin taking doxycycline during an anthrax emergency. It is your choice whether to take the preventive antibiotic or not. If you do not take the doxycycline when you are instructed to do so, you are possibly increasing your risk of severe anthrax disease.
- If you take doxycycline as directed and begin to feel sick anyway, get medical care right away.
- Adults - take one pill (100 mg) in the morning and one pill in the evening on an empty stomach with a full glass of water.
- If you get an upset stomach or indigestion, take it with some food or milk. Be sure to drink lots of fluids.
- If you miss a dose, take only the next scheduled dose - **Do not take 2 doses at one time.**
- Doxycycline may not work as well when taken with some medicines. Take it 2 hours before or 2 hours after taking: antacids; multivitamins or supplements with magnesium, calcium, aluminum, iron, zinc, or sodium bicarbonate; sucralfate (Carafate); didanosine (Videx), colestipol (Colestid); cholestyramine; bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto Bismol, Helidac, Kaopectate); **or any other products to treat indigestion, nausea, or diarrhea.**

- **Talk to your doctor if you are taking blood thinners** or seizure medicines. Doxycycline may affect dosing of certain blood thinners or seizure medicines.
- Keep the pills dry in the container they came in, and keep the container closed tightly. Store them at room temperature (between 68-77°F or 20-25°C).
- Keep doxycycline out of the reach of children and pets. Call the Poison Control 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 any other tetracycline drug.

#### **STOP taking doxycycline if you get any of these serious, but rare, side effects; get medical help right away (go to the emergency room or call 911):**

- closing of the throat or trouble breathing or swallowing
- swelling of the lips, tongue, or face
- severe itching or rash, especially hives and welts
- 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 doxycycline if you have:**

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

#### **Are there other possible severe side effects?**

- Serious liver problems (liver failure).
- Sensitivity to the sun. Use sunscreen and cover exposed skin.
- Birth control pills may not work as well while taking antibiotics. Use an additional form of birth control until you finish taking all of your doxycycline.
- Discolored teeth and/or poor tooth enamel in children has been demonstrated in children with *in utero* exposure to tetracyclines during the last half of pregnancy

#### **How do I report side effects or medication errors?**

Tell your doctor or healthcare provider right away and report side effects or medication errors to MedWatch at [www.fda.gov/medwatch](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch) (1-800-FDA-1088).

#### **How should I dispose of the doxycycline when it reaches its expiration date?**

When the drug reaches its expiration date it should be properly discarded. The FDA recommends procedures for disposing of expired drugs at [http://www.fda.gov/drugs/resourcesforyou/consumers/buyingusingmedicinesafely/ensuringsafeuseofmedicine/safe\\_disposalofmedicines](http://www.fda.gov/drugs/resourcesforyou/consumers/buyingusingmedicinesafely/ensuringsafeuseofmedicine/safe_disposalofmedicines). In general, the process involves crushing the medicines and mixing with materials such as coffee grounds, that are discarded in household trash.