PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Doxycycline

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Acticlate [DSC]; Avidoxy; Doryx; Doryx MPC; Doxy 100; Lymepak [DSC]; Mondoxyne NL; Oracea; TargaDOX; Vibramycin [DSC]

Brand Names: Canada

AG-Doxycycline; APO-Doxy; APO-Doxy-Tabs; APO-Doxycycline MR; Apprilon; BIO-Doxycycline; Doxycin; Doxytab; JAMP-Doxycycline; M-Doxycycline; NRA-Doxycycline; PMS-Doxycycline; PRZ-Doxycycline; TEVA-Doxycycline

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat pimples (acne).
- It is used to treat or prevent bacterial infections.
- It is used to prevent malaria.
- It is used to treat swelling of the tissue around the teeth (periodontitis). It is used with scaling and root planing.
- It is used to treat rosacea.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child is taking any of these drugs: Acitretin, isotretinoin, or a penicillin.

If your child is breast-feeding a baby:

- Your child may need to avoid breast-feeding a baby.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

All products:

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have blood work checked if your child is on this drug for a long time. Talk with your child's doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- Do not give to your child longer than you have been told. A second infection may happen.
- If your child is allergic to sulfites, talk with your child's doctor. Some products have sulfites in them.

- This drug may make your child sunburn more easily. Use care if your child will be in the sun. Tell your child's doctor if your child sunburns easily while taking this drug.
- This drug may change tooth color to yellow-gray brown if taken by children younger than 8 years old, or in the unborn baby if taken during some parts of pregnancy. If this change of tooth color happens, it will not go away. Other tooth problems have also happened. Bone growth may also be affected in these people taking this drug. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- Most of the time, this drug is not for use in children younger than 8 years old. However, there may be times when these children may need to take this drug. Talk with the doctor.
- Change in tooth color has also happened in adults. This has gone back to normal after this drug was stopped and teeth cleaning at a dentist's office. Talk with the doctor.

If your child is or may be sexually active:

- Birth control pills and other hormone-based birth control may not work as well to prevent pregnancy. Be sure your child uses some other kind of birth control also, like a condom, when taking this drug.

If your child is pregnant:

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy. If your child is pregnant or gets pregnant while taking this drug, call the doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered,

or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.

- Signs of liver problems like dark urine, tiredness, decreased appetite, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- Signs of a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Chest pain or pressure or a fast heartbeat.
- Not able to pass urine or change in how much urine is passed.
- Fever, chills, or sore throat; any unexplained bruising or bleeding; or feeling very tired or weak.
- Throat irritation.
- Trouble swallowing.
- Mood changes.
- Muscle or joint pain.
- Fast breathing.
- Flushing.
- Severe dizziness or passing out.
- Change in skin color.
- Vaginal itching or discharge.
- Diarrhea is common with antibiotics. Sometimes, diarrhea may be caused by a certain bowel infection (C diff). C diff may happen during treatment or within a few months after the last dose. This infection can be severe or even deadly. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has stomach cramps, fever, long-lasting diarrhea, very loose or watery stools, or bloody stools. Check with your child's doctor before treating diarrhea.
- Raised pressure in the brain has happened with this drug. Most of the time, this will go back to normal after this drug is stopped. Sometimes, loss of

eyesight may happen and may not go away even after this drug is stopped. Call the doctor right away if your child has a headache or eyesight problems like blurred eyesight, seeing double, or loss of eyesight.

- Severe skin reactions may happen with this drug. These include Stevens-Johnson syndrome (SJS), toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN), and other serious reactions. Sometimes, body organs may also be affected. These reactions can be deadly. Get medical help right away if your child has signs like red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin; red or irritated eyes; sores in the mouth, throat, nose, eyes, genitals, or any areas of skin; fever; chills; body aches; shortness of breath; or swollen glands.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Decreased appetite.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All oral products:

- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.
- Some drugs may need to be given with food or on an empty stomach. For

some drugs, it does not matter. Check with your pharmacist about how to give this drug to your child.

- It is best to avoid taking this drug at the same time as milk, dairy, or other products with calcium. This drug may not work as well. If you have questions, talk with the doctor or pharmacist.
- Have your child drink lots of noncaffeine liquids every day unless told to drink less liquid by your child's doctor.
- Do not give bismuth (Pepto-Bismol®), calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc, multivitamins with minerals, colestipol, cholestyramine, didanosine, or antacids within 2 hours of this drug.

Tablets and capsules:

- Give this drug with a full glass of water.
- Do not let your child lie down after taking this drug. This will help lower the chance of throat irritation. Ask the pharmacist how long before your child can lie down after taking this drug.

Delayed-release tablets:

- Have your child swallow whole. Do not let your child chew or crush.
- The tablet may be broken if the doctor tells you to.
- You may sprinkle contents of tablet on applesauce. Be careful to break the tablet without crushing the pellets. Do not chew, crush, or damage the contents of the tablet.
- Do not mix with hot applesauce.
- If mixed, have your child swallow the mixed drug right away. Do not store for use at a later time.

All liquid products:

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

Liquid (suspension):

- Shake well before use.

Injection:

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

All oral products:

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Injection:

- Call your child's doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

All oral products:

- Store at room temperature protected from light. Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Get rid of this drug when your child no longer needs it or if the drug is outdated.
- Do not give this drug if it has not been stored as you have been told.

Liquid (syrup):

- Throw away any unused part of this drug.

Liquid (suspension):

- Store liquid (suspension) at room temperature. Throw away any part not used after 2 weeks.

Injection:

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your child's doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

All products:

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2025-04-22

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Doxycycline - Last updated on December 12, 2022
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center