

**Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT)**  
***A Guide for Sex Partners***  
***Gonorrhea – Cefixime & Doxycycline***

**Why am I getting extra medicine or a prescription?**

One of your sex partners has been diagnosed with and treated for gonorrhea, a disease that is transmitted by having sex. You also need to be treated so you don't develop gonorrhea or related serious health problems, re-infect your sex partner, or pass it on to others.

**What is gonorrhea?**

Gonorrhea is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) passed through oral, anal, and vaginal sex. People who have gonorrhea, especially women, usually have no symptoms. If there are symptoms, symptoms in women can include pain or burning during urination, increased vaginal discharge, or vaginal bleeding between periods. Common symptoms of gonorrhea infection in men include a burning sensation while urinating, or a white, yellow, or green discharge from the penis, or painful or swollen testicles. Gonorrhea can also infect the anus and throat. Symptoms of rectal infection may include discharge, anal itching, soreness, bleeding, or painful bowel movements. Infections in the throat may cause a sore throat. **Even without symptoms, gonorrhea can be passed on to sex partners.**

**Why should I take this medicine?**

If not treated, gonorrhea infections can lead to serious and permanent health problems like infertility (not being able to have children) and pelvic inflammatory disease. Infection with gonorrhea can be very painful and can affect the testicles in men, and the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries in women. It can also lead to an unusual pregnancy in the fallopian tubes (ectopic pregnancy). If not treated, gonorrhea can also spread to the blood and joints, which can be life-threatening.

**What is Expedited Partner Therapy?**

A health care provider has given your sex partner medicine or a prescription to give to you so that you can be treated for gonorrhea. This is called Expedited Partner Therapy (EPT) and is a convenient, fast and private way for you to be treated.

**Is Expedited Partner Therapy legal and is it safe?**

Yes, Maine State law allows health care providers to provide medicine or a prescription to patients diagnosed with chlamydia so they can give it to their partners. There are two medicines to treat gonorrhea: doxycycline and cefixime. Both are safe and almost 100% effective when used as directed for gonorrhea infections in the vagina, penis, or anus. However, this medicine may not be as effective in treating gonorrhea infections of the throat.

**Will this medicine cure all STDs?**

**NO.** This medicine will ONLY cure gonorrhea and chlamydia. If you think that you may have or have been exposed to other STDs, you should visit a health care provider and discuss your concerns and get tested.

**What is this medicine?**

The medicine you are getting is an antibiotic; it will cure your gonorrhea (or gonorrhea/chlamydia) infection but will not treat other STDs you may have.

**DO NOT TAKE this medicine if any of the following are true:**

- You have lower stomach pain, cramps, pain during sex, throwing up, pain in the testicles (balls) or a fever.
- You are allergic or have ever had a bad reaction, rash, or allergy to any antibiotics, including doxycycline, minocycline, tetracycline, sulfites, cefixime (Suprax), or cephalosporins.
- You have any serious, long-term health problems like kidney, heart or liver disease; seizures; or you are taking blood thinners.
- You are pregnant or nursing, or if you think you are pregnant.

If **any** of the above is true and you cannot take the medicine, you should see a health care provider as soon as possible so they can give you another medicine that cures gonorrhea.

## How should I take the medicine?

### Cefixime:

- Take the cefixime prescribed to you right away (by mouth). Do not share this medicine; you need to take it all for it to work.
- Take it on an empty stomach (at least 1 hour before eating or 2 hours after eating).
- If you throw up within an hour of taking the medicine, it will not work and you will have to get more. Call the telephone number on the prescription or call (207) 287-3747.

### Doxycycline

- Take the doxycycline prescribed to you twice a day (1 pill after breakfast, 1 pill after dinner) until you finish the prescription and have no more pills left.
- Do not take this medicine within 2 hours of taking antacids.
- **If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember it.** However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one. Call the number on the prescription or call (207) 287-3747.

## What should I do next?

- Do not have sex (vaginal, oral or anal) for at least 7 days after you and your sex partners have been treated. The medicine takes 7 days to work. You can get gonorrhea again if you have sex before the medicine cures you and your partner.
- See a doctor and get checked for other STDs (including HIV). Even if you take the medicine, it is important to get tested for other STDs because you can have more than one STD at a time. This medicine only cures gonorrhea (or infection with both gonorrhea and chlamydia).

## Other Questions You May Have

### What if I don't think I have gonorrhea?

You can have gonorrhea even if you feel fine. Because you had sex with someone who has gonorrhea, you might also have it, and you should be treated. Many STDs don't cause symptoms so it is good to see a health care provider to find out if you have illness.

### How do I know this medicine is real; what if I have questions?

You can call (207) 287-3747 or the phone number on the prescription, or visit <http://mainepublichealth.gov/std> for answers to your questions.

### What if I am pregnant or think I may be pregnant?

Doxycycline is not recommended for use in women who are pregnant, nursing, or who think they are pregnant. If you are or think you are pregnant, see a health care provider as soon as possible for testing and treatment. You should be tested for other STDs that can be passed on from a mother to her baby during pregnancy and delivery. Tell the provider you were treated because your sex partner had gonorrhea.

### What can I expect when I go to the pharmacy to pick up the medicine?

If your sex partner gave you a prescription for medicine, the pharmacist may ask for your name, address, date of birth and form of payment (insurance, co-payment, self-pay) when the prescription is dropped off or picked up at the pharmacy.

### Does doxycycline and cefixime cause side effects?

Not always but if there are side-effects, they may include one or more of the following: mild, upset stomach (which does not last long) after taking this medicine. Other side effects include diarrhea, nausea, stomach ache, and headache. These are common and not dangerous. Stay out of the sun or use sunscreen and wear sunglasses while you are taking this medication. Talk to a doctor or pharmacist if you have any concerns.

If you throw up within an hour of taking cefixime, you need to visit a clinic or a doctor to get more medicine because the medicine did not have time to work. Contact the number on the prescription or call (207) 287-3747.

### What kind of side effects can be dangerous?

It is rare, but some people do experience serious allergic reactions. These reactions can cause trouble breathing, chest tightness, closing of the throat, swelling of the lips or tongue and hives (itchy bumps on the skin). If you have any of these problems after taking this medicine, immediately call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

**What if I don't take the medicine?**

If you decide not to take the medicine, you should see a health care provider to get tested as soon as possible. Gonorrhea that is not treated can lead to serious health problems and can be spread to other sex partners.

For more information please call (207) 287-3747 or visit us at <http://mainepublichealth.gov/std>

**How do I Avoid Sexually Transmitted Diseases?**

- The only way to completely avoid STDs, including HIV, is to not have sex.
- If you do have sex, do it safely. Use a latex condom every time and for every kind of sex – oral, anal and vaginal.
- You can reduce your chances of getting chlamydia and other STDs, including HIV, by limiting the number of people you have sex with. The more sex partners you have, the higher your risk of getting an STD.

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