



BRITISH COLUMBIA
CENTRE for EXCELLENCE
in HIV/AIDS

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BC CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN HIV/AIDS LAUNCHES NEW INITIATIVE TARGETING SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS IN BC

The doxycycline initiative is the first program of its kind in Canada in response to the doubling of syphilis rates since 2020

Vancouver, B.C. – The BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE) is proud to announce the launch of a new Doxycycline initiative for the prevention of bacterial sexually transmitted infections including syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia. With the support of BC Minister of Health Adrian Dix, the targeted program will begin for BC-CfE patients who meet the criteria on December 1, 2023.

“We are making it easier and more affordable for people in B.C. to get the treatment they need to protect themselves against bacterial sexually transmitted infections (b-STIs) specifically syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “That is why starting December 1, we are making post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) doxycycline available at no cost to eligible patients, which is a crucial step in reducing the spread of b-STI in B.C. This is an expansion of the Treatment as Prevention strategy that we know works and has had tremendous success with the fight against HIV/AIDS”

This announcement comes in the context of an evolving outbreak of syphilis. According to BCCDC data, the number of Infectious Syphilis cases in British Columbia has nearly doubled from 911 in 2020 to 1973 cases in 2022¹. Between January and June 2023, 988 cases were reported in BC.

As shown by a recent report focused on men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender women in the New England Journal of Medicine, a 200mg dose of Doxycycline taken within 72 hours of a high-risk

¹ Zeidler, et al. February 19, 2023. CBC news. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/rise-syphilis-bc-1.6750090>



sexual encounter can decrease sexually transmitted infection incidence by two-thirds². Similar results were also reported from a recent pilot Canadian multicenter study, including BC-CfE and BCCDC investigators, the Dual Daily HIV and Syphilis (DuDHS) trial.

Dr. Julio Montaner, Executive Director and Physician-in-Chief of the BC-CfE, said: "The new Doxycycline initiative is based on the successful model that has made the BC-CfE a world leader in the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS. It builds on the made-in-BC (TasP) strategy which includes the facilitated and supported access to testing, treatment in the form of ART and prevention, including HIV PrEP. TasP has been very successful in reducing new HIV infections in BC. It is a fundamental part of BC-CfE's mandate to improve the health of British Columbians through the development, facilitation, monitoring and evaluation of new research and treatment programs for individuals living with or at risk of communicable diseases."

Doxycycline is a second-generation, generally well tolerated, tetracycline with a limited antibacterial spectrum. It was first available commercially in the 1960s, and since then, doxycycline has been used by millions for treatment of acne vulgaris with favorable safety and efficacy. While doxycycline is already a PharmaCare benefit for acne vulgaris, including it in the BC-CfE's Drug Treatment Program because it is a safe, effective and inexpensive strategy to reduce the incidence of bacterial sexually transmitted infections, including gonorrhea, chlamydia, or syphilis will help more people access and benefit from doxycycline at no cost.

Prescriptions will be available to health care providers using the same mechanisms currently in place to prescribe HIV PrEP or Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) through the BC-CfE. At this time, the criteria for eligibility are limited to those who have seen the benefit of this treatment in published, peer reviewed research. As part of its rigorous ongoing monitoring for safety and efficacy of HIV treatment and prevention, the BC-CfE will monitor, evaluate and report on the safety and efficacy of the doxycycline initiative with the reports publicly accessible on the BC-CfE website.

² Luetkemeyer, et al. *New Engl J Med*. April 6 2023. 388, 1296-1306.
<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2211934>



About the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS

The BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS (BC-CfE) is Canada's largest HIV/AIDS research, treatment and education facility – nationally and internationally recognized as an innovative world leader in combating HIV/AIDS and related diseases. The made-in- BC Treatment as Prevention® strategy (TasP®) pioneered by BC-CfE, and supported by UNAIDS since 2011, inspired the ambitious global target for HIV treatment - known as the 90-90-90 Target by 2020 and current 95-95-95 Target by 2025 - to end AIDS as a pandemic by 2030. The BC-CfE is applying TasP® to therapeutic areas beyond HIV/AIDS, including viral hepatitis and addiction, to promote Targeted Disease Elimination® as a means to contribute to healthcare sustainability. The BC-CfE works in close collaboration with key stakeholders, including government, health authorities, health care providers, academics, and the community to decrease the health burden of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C and addictions across Canada and around the world.

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