

Appropriate prescribing of doxycycline.

Prescribing and medicines optimisation scheme 2026 to 2027 Version 1.4

Background

This prescribing scheme is adapted from NHS England's Antibiotic Prescribing Improvement Scheme Concepts to Enhance antimicrobial Stewardship (PISCES)¹.

Unnecessarily long courses of antimicrobials is one of the factors driving antimicrobial resistance and an increased risk of *Clostridioides difficile* (C. difficile) infection in at-risk populations.

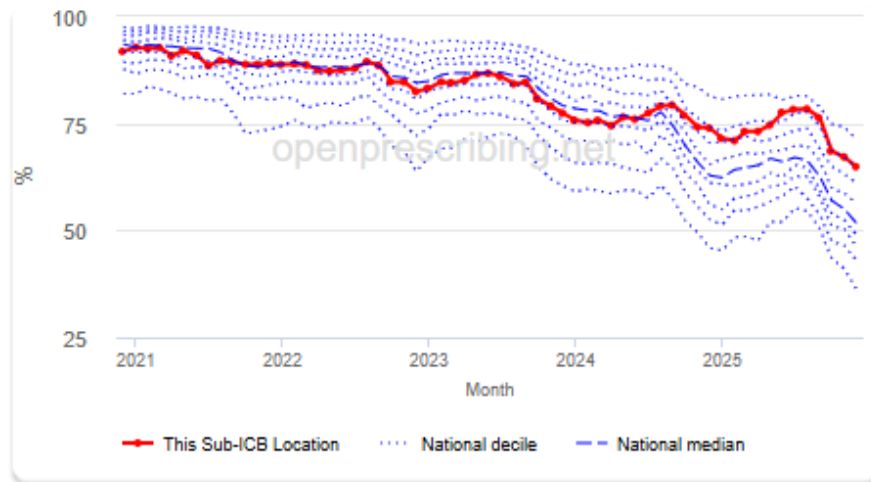
Primary care prescribing data suggests that the shortest, most effective antibiotic course lengths are not consistently prescribed. Furthermore, across general practice there is considerable variation in the proportion of shorter and longer course prescriptions. Within this there may be a health inequality in patient exposure to the harms of antibiotics and the threat of antimicrobial resistance.

Benefits of prescribing the shortest, most effective course length include:

- Reduced risk of adverse drug reactions and toxicity.
- Reduced selection pressure for antimicrobial resistance and with this of patients becoming infected with or carrying resistant bacteria.
- Reduced disruption of commensal bacteria (normal flora or microbiota) and with this reduced risk of opportunistic infection with pathogens such as C. difficile.
- Reduced risk of patients having 'leftover' antibiotics and inappropriately self-treating future infections with them or giving them to others.
- Reduced risk of patients disposing of 'leftover' antibiotics in household waste or wastewater, thereby reducing the risk of selection for antimicrobial resistance in bacteria in the environment.
- Reduced waste in the manufacture, packaging, transportation and disposal of antibiotics with associated reduction in carbon footprint and costs.

Using [data from OpenPrescribing](#)³, prescribing of doxycycline courses over 5 days within NHS Cornwall and Isles of Scilly integrated care board (ICB) during the month of December 2025 was at 64.8%.

Proportion of prescription items of doxycycline 100mg capsules with quantity greater than 6 capsules/dispersible tablets

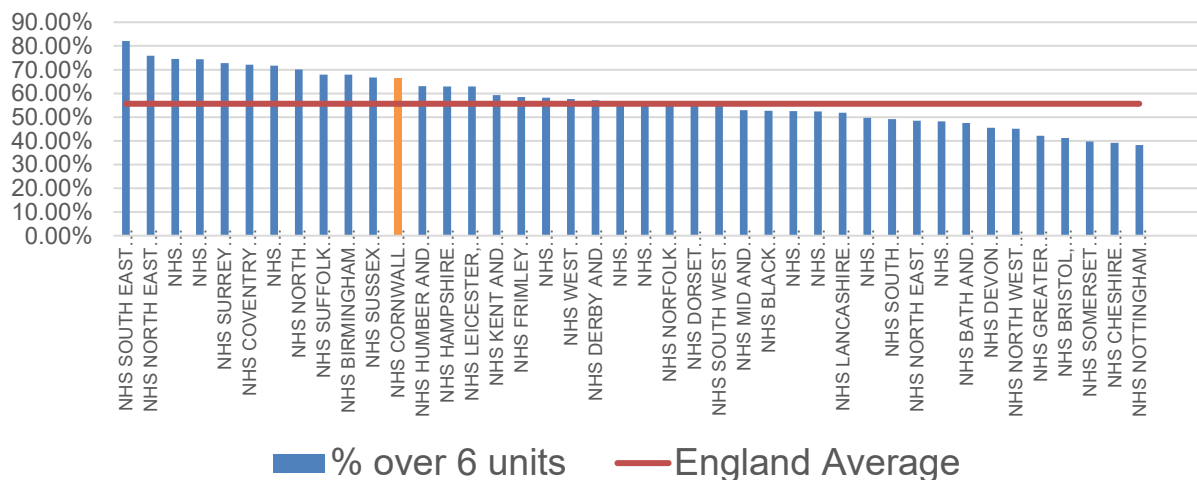


Data can also be broken down further on OpenPrescribing to see [prescribing in each practice](#).

For comparison to other ICBs, in the 3 months to end of December 2025:

- The ICB with the highest % of more than 6 dose units was prescribing at 82.1%
- The ICB with the lowest % of more than 6 dose units was prescribing at 38.2%
- NHS Cornwall ICB was 12th highest at 66.45%
- The England average was 55.6%.

Percentage of prescriptions for doxycycline 100mg capsules or tablets with a quantity greater than 6 units (Oct to Dec 2025)



Clinical guidance

Practices should follow the local management of infection guidelines for primary and community services⁴, which can be found on the [formulary](#). These guidelines are adapted following National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and UK Health Security Agency antimicrobial prescribing guidance - managing common infections, along with recommendations and practical advice from Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust (RCHT).

Under the guidelines, the following conditions recommend a course length of over 5 days:

Condition	Recommended course length
Bronchiectasis exacerbation	7-14 days
Chlamydia trachomatis	7 days
Pelvic inflammatory disease	14 days (following dose of ceftriaxone)
Cellulitis	5-7 days
Leg ulcers	7 days
Diabetic foot ulcer	7 days
MRSA	7-10 days

Longer courses of doxycycline may also be prescribed as part of acne treatment. Where this is the case, the NICE [acne vulgaris: management](#) guideline should be following, including recommendations on duration and review.

Recommendation

Practices are asked to complete 2 steps:

- 1) Ensure the default is set to 5-day course of doxycycline.
 - i. For SystmOne this will be at practice level
 - ii. For EMIS this will be at prescriber level
- 2) To identify patients prescribed doxycycline on repeat and to review, considering whether it is required on repeat prescription and, if to continue, to ensure that it is being prescribed at the correct duration.

Patients can be identified in the search provided for each clinical system.

Step 1:

Conduct searches for patients prescribed doxycycline on repeat. Add number found to 'Step 1' sheet of the Excel spreadsheet titled 'Doxycycline data' (located in the [PMOS support documents](#) zip folder on the formulary).

Ensure that the practice default setting for quantities of doxycycline 100mg capsules and dispersible tablets is 5 days (6 dose units to cover 200mg stat dose, followed by 100mg daily for 4 more days). SystmOne practices can change their practice default setting, prescribers using EMIS will need to individually enter a course length of 5 days and save it (it is not possible to amend the whole practice setting on EMIS).

Instructions on how to do this can be found in Appendix 1 and 2. Confirm in sheet 1 of the Excel spreadsheet that this has been completed.

- For EMIS practices this may be confirmation that prescribers have been asked to use 5 days as their default.

Step 2:

Review repeat prescriptions for doxycycline 100mg capsules or dispersible tablets that have been issued in the last 6 months. Searches are available for practice systems.

Where a patient has been issued a repeat prescription, please follow the following steps:

- Review whether there is still a clinical need for this to be on their repeat prescription list.
- If to continue, ensure that the quantity prescribed aligns with the [management of infection guidelines for primary and community services](#).
- Ensure that the length of the repeat is specified to prompt when a review is due.
- Ensure that the indication is recorded and coded.
- If a change in quantity is indicated, ensure that the patient is counselled appropriately.
 - For example, if being used as a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) rescue pack, ensure that the patient is aware of any change of course length and is using their rescue pack appropriately.
- Record all results on Excel spreadsheet (Step 2 sheet).

Payment

Completion of the protocol attracts a payment of 10p per listed patient.

Full payment will be made to practices achieving the target of at least 55% of doxycycline prescriptions being for 6 dose units (5-day course).

To calculate proportional payments where practices have made some progress toward the target, prescribing data comparing the last quarter of financial year 2025 to 2026 to the last quarter of 2026 to 2027 will be used. Payment is dependent on the return of the completed Excel spreadsheet.

Please return completed Excel spreadsheets to ciosicb.prescribing@nhs.net by 31 March 2027.

References

- 1) Prescribing improvement scheme for local adaptation: Appropriate durations of antibiotic course lengths. NHS England. January 2025. Available from: https://future.nhs.uk/A_M_R/view?objectID=244174757
- 2) Antibiotic stewardship: courses for doxycycline 100mg greater than 6 capsules/dispersible tablets. OpenPrescribing. Accessed February 2026. Available from: [Prescribing on Antibiotic stewardship: courses for doxycycline 100mg greater than 6 capsules/dispersible tablets for NHS CORNWALL AND THE ISLES OF SCILLY | OpenPrescribing](#)
- 3) Management of infection guidelines for primary and community services. NHS Cornwall and IOS ICB. September 2024. Available from: [https://www.eclipsesolutions.org/UploadedFiles/799_Antimicrobial%20guidelines%20version%208%20\(Sept%202024\)%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.eclipsesolutions.org/UploadedFiles/799_Antimicrobial%20guidelines%20version%208%20(Sept%202024)%20FINAL.pdf)

Appendix 1: altering default quantities in EMIS

Doxycycline 100mg default quantity of 6 on EMIS – there are 2 ways to do this:

Method 1: Completing the default blank dose

- 1) Select dose A – “Two to be taken on the first day, then one to be taken each day – 0 capsules”

The screenshot shows the EMIS prescription form for Doxycycline 100mg capsules. The 'Dosage' dropdown menu is open, displaying several options. Option A, 'Two To Be Taken On The First Day Then One To Be Taken Each Day (0 capsule)', is highlighted. The 'Quantity' field is currently blank. The 'Pack Details' panel on the right shows a table of pack sizes and prices.

Description	Price	Supplier
8 capsule	£0.73	Drug Tariff England/Wales
14 capsule	£5.25	Kent Pharma (UK) Ltd
50 capsule	£19.00	Kent Pharma (UK) Ltd
6 capsule	£1.00	Drugsrus Ltd
6 capsule	£0.57	Alliance Healthcare (Distribution) Ltd

- 2) This will leave the quantity section blank.

The screenshot shows the EMIS prescription form with the 'Dosage' dropdown set to 'Two To Be Taken On The First Day Then One To Be Taken Each Day'. The 'Quantity' field is blank, and the 'Duration' is set to 28 days. The 'Pack Details' panel on the right is visible.

- 3) Type in “6” into the quantity.

The screenshot shows the EMIS prescription form with the 'Quantity' field now containing the number '6'. The 'Duration' remains at 28 days. The 'Pack Details' panel on the right is visible.

Method 2: Custom doses/quantities

In EMIS, if you enter a dosage that isn't recognised against that drug, it will ask you to provide further details about the quantity and dose.

Once you save these details, you can recall them again under the same drug by using the drop-down menu under Dosage which will then populate the quantity and duration fields.

- 1) In the dosage section, type in a suitable custom dose. For example: “Take TWO capsules on the first day, then one daily thereafter.”
- 2) This will cause a pop-up box to appear.

Name: Doxycycline 100mg capsules

Dosage: Take TWO capsules on the first day, then one daily thereafter

Quantity: capsule Duration: 28 Day(s)

Rx Types: Acute

Authorising Clinician: CHONG, Mere (Ms)

Warnings Drug Information Current Medication

Selected Drug - Doxycycline 100mg capsule

Contains - Doxycycline Hyclate 100 mg

Pack Details

Description	Price	Supplier
8 capsule	£0.73	Drug Tariff England/Wales
14 capsule	£5.25	Kent Pharma (UK) Ltd
50 capsule	£19.00	Kent Pharma (UK) Ltd
6 capsule	£1.00	Drugsrus Ltd
	£0.57	Alliance Healthcare (Distribution) Ltd

Prescription Information

- 3) In the quantity section, type 6.
For the dropdown menu, select "Weeks". Then press Save details.

Dosage

The dosage "Take TWO capsules on the first day, then one daily thereafter" is not recognised. Provide details of the dosage below:

Quantity: 6 Per: Weeks Unit: capsule

Save details Ignore

- 4) Prescribe the medicine.
- 5) Next time you prescribe doxycycline, you can select your custom dose (in blue), and it will automatically fill in your custom dosage and quantity.

Doxycycline 100mg capsules

One To Be Taken Each Day (28 capsule)

Take One Capsule Once A Day Starting 1 To 2 Days Before Entering Endemi...

Take Two Capsules Once A Day (56 capsule)

One To Be Taken Twice A Day (14 capsule)

One To Be Taken Twice A Day (28 capsule)

One To Be Taken Twice A Day (56 capsule)

Two To Be Taken Twice A Day (112 capsule)

H Take TWO capsules on the first day, then one daily thereafter (6 capsules) [Remove](#)

Drug Information Current Medication Past Medication Allergies Problems

Appendix 2: altering default quantities in SystmOne

Setting preset quantities in SystmOne

In SystmOne, users can add preset dosage and quantity information for specific drugs into a system formulary.

Choose the Joint formulary tab and search for doxycycline, it will give you the option to use that preset to autofill the dosage and quantity fields for that drug, as below.

Check the formulary entry shows 'Total quantity number' is 6 capsules for a 5 day duration. If not the entry can be amended using the 'Amend formulary entry' - see below

Select Drug or Appliance

Drug & Appliance Browser | Formularies | Free Text Drugs & Appliances | Settings

Available Formularies

- Custom Formulary
- Dressings Formulary
- First line inhalers
- Joint formulary 312
- Minor Ops
- Oral Nutritional Suppleme...
- Palliative care formulary
- Second line inhalers
- xArdens do not use

9 Formularies

Selected Formulary Contents

doxyc

Drug	Dose	Quantity	Cou...	Indica...	Flags
Doxycycline 100mg capsules	TWO to be taken on Day One then ONE to be taken ONCE daily thereafter.	6 capsule	5	0.73	*

1 Drug in this formulary

Sensitivities & Allergies: ⚠ Allergy to grass pollen

OK Cancel

If doxycycline is not included in the formulary, you can add it.

Setup>Prescribing>Drug formularies then use the "Add Drug" button.

If the directions and quantities are wrong, you can amend it

Setup>Prescribing>Drug formularies then use the "Amend Drug" button.

Amend Formulary Entry

Formulary name

Joint formulary 312

Drug

Doxycycline 100mg capsules

Dose

TWO to be taken on Day One then ONE to be taken ONCE daily ther

do %

dose

Times & Doses

Total quantity

Number

6

capsule

Packs

Free Text

Issue duration

5

Days

Synonyms

Nothing selected

Ok

Cancel

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