[PTI](http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-metroplus/health-antibiotic/article17900569.ece)

APRIL 10, 2017 00:00 IST

UPDATED: APRIL 10, 2017 04:12 IST

**Common antibiotic may help treat PTSD: study**

A common antibiotic may help treat or prevent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by disrupting the formation of negative thoughts and fears in the brain, a new study claims. Researchers, including those from University College London in the UK, gave 76 healthy volunteers either the antibiotic doxycycline or a placebo and were put in front of a computer.

The screen would flash either blue or red, and one of the colours was associated with a 50 per cent chance of receiving a painful electric shock. This happened 160 times, with the colours appearing in random order, so that participants learnt to associate the ‘bad’ colour with the shock. A week later, under no medication, participants returned to repeat the experiment. This time, there were no electric shocks, but a loud sound played after either colour was shown. Participants’ fear responses were measured by tracking their eye blinks, as this is an instinctive response to sudden threats.

Researchers found that fear response was 60 per cent lower in participants who had doxycycline in the first session compared to those who had the placebo, suggesting that the fear memory was significantly suppressed by the drug.

The study was published in the journal Molecular Psychiatry .PTI