



June 20, 2023

Health Advisory: Penicillin G Benzathine (Bicillin L-A) Shortage Update

- Long-acting penicillin G benzathine injectable suspension products (Bicillin® L-A), the first-line treatment for syphilis and the only recommended treatment for pregnant people and infants with syphilis, is in limited supply according to the CDC and the FDA. This shortage is anticipated to continue until quarter 2 of 2024.
- Health care providers may use acceptable alternatives such as Doxycycline 100 mg in specific doses. Other intramuscular formulations of penicillin, such as Bicillin® C-R, are not acceptable alternatives for the treatment of syphilis.
- Health care providers should follow CDPH guidelines for prioritization and conservation of shortage drugs.

Prompt and timely treatment of syphilis in pregnancy is nearly 100% effective at preventing devastating outcomes of congenital syphilis, including the fact that up to 40% of infants born to pregnant people with untreated syphilis will be stillborn or suffer early infant death, or face long-term morbidity including blindness, deafness, and bone damage.

Actions Requested of San Mateo County Clinicians

1. Prioritize penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A) for pregnant people with syphilis infection (or exposure) as well as for infants exposed to syphilis in utero.
2. Prioritize Bicillin L-A for patients with contraindication to doxycycline (e.g. anaphylaxis, hemolytic anemia, Steven's Johnson syndrome)
3. Among non-pregnant adults during this shortage use doxycycline:

Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID x 14 days is an acceptable alternative for those with primary, secondary, or early latent syphilis.

Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID x 28 days is an acceptable alternative for those with late latent syphilis or syphilis of unknown duration.





4. Contact San Mateo County Health if need Bicillin L-A for pregnant person with syphilis infection, infant exposed in utero or persons with contraindication to doxycycline at 650 573 2346 to request from the California STD Branch..

Follow-up clinical and serologic evaluation should be performed after treatment at the recommended intervals per the 2021 CDC STI Treatment Guidelines.

Additional Resources: Bicillin L-A

- [CDC announcement about Bicillin L-A shortage](#)
- [CDC STI Treatment Guidelines for Syphilis](#)
- FDA Bicillin L-A shortage webpage
https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/drugshortages/dsp_ActiveIngredientDetails.cfm?AI=Penicillin%20G%20Benzathine%20Injectable%20Suspension&st=c&tab=tabs-1

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