



Date: May 10, 2016
To: CAHAN San Diego Participants
From: Public Health Services, HIV, STD and Hepatitis Services Branch

Limited Availability of Long-Acting Bicillin

This health advisory notifies CAHAN participants that there is a national shortage of the long-acting form of benzathine penicillin G that is recommended for treatment of most stages of syphilis and all pregnant women with syphilis (i.e., Bicillin LA) and requests local providers to prioritize the use of Bicillin LA for pregnant women who are infected with or exposed to syphilis.

Background

Currently, there is a national shortage of the long-acting form of benzathine penicillin G that is recommended for treatment of most stages of syphilis and all pregnant women with syphilis (i.e., Bicillin LA). Penicillin G is the recommended treatment for all stages of syphilis and is the only antibiotic known to prevent maternal transmission of *Treponema pallidum* to a fetus (i.e., congenital syphilis). Long-acting benzathine penicillin G (Bicillin LA) is recommended for treatment of all stages of adult syphilis, excluding neurosyphilis and ocular syphilis. For non-pregnant adults who cannot receive penicillin, alternative medications such as doxycycline may be used. Other formulations of penicillin G, such as Bicillin CR, are not acceptable alternatives to Bicillin LA for syphilis treatment.

Pregnant women infected with or exposed to syphilis must receive Bicillin LA without exception. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) [2015 STD Treatment Guidelines](#) provide detailed recommendations for stage-specific treatment of syphilis, including management of pregnant women with syphilis.

Due to a manufacturing delay, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced a national shortage of Bicillin LA on April 29, 2016. Bicillin LA is currently on allocation, and the backorder is expected to resolve in July 2016. Updates regarding this shortage may be obtained at the [FDA Drug Shortage webpage](#).

Requested Actions

Until supplies of Bicillin LA normalize, consideration should be given to prioritizing the use of Bicillin LA for the treatment of syphilis in pregnant women infected with or exposed to syphilis. If supplies permit, other priority groups may include patients with absolute contraindications to recommended alternative treatment regimens for syphilis, and patients with primary or secondary syphilis (i.e., the most infectious stages of syphilis) who are unlikely to comply with alternative treatment.

For indications other than syphilis, providers are encouraged to use alternative treatment regimens when possible based on [national guidelines](#). Examples of this include:

- Using recommended oral medications, such as penicillin V, amoxicillin, and azithromycin, for treatment of pharyngitis due to Group A β -hemolytic streptococci and primary rheumatic fever prophylaxis.
- Using oral penicillin V for secondary rheumatic fever prophylaxis if compliance is not an issue.

For assistance in obtaining Bicillin LA for a pregnant patient, or for any questions regarding the Bicillin LA shortage or STD management, please page (877) 217-1816 or call STD Field Services at (619) 692-8501.

Drug shortages may be reported to the FDA by clicking [here](#).

To sign up to receive monthly County of San Diego STD Reports that update information on STD rates in San Diego residents and provide the latest on management options, email STD@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Thank you for your participation.

CAHAN San Diego

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HIV, STD & Hepatitis Branch

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