



**ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AGENCY  
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Division of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention  
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**Health Advisory  
Bicillin L-A (Benzathine Penicillin G) Shortage  
June 13, 2016**

**Situation**

On April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016, a Bicillin L-A (benzathine penicillin G) drug shortage was announced by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). **Benzathine penicillin G is the recommended treatment for syphilis and the only recommended treatment for pregnant women infected with or exposed to syphilis.** Other formulations of penicillin, including Bicillin C-R, are not acceptable alternatives to Bicillin L-A for syphilis treatment.<sup>1</sup> The manufacturer estimates the Bicillin L-A shortage will last until at least July, 2016.

**Actions Requested of Clinicians**

Until normal quantities of Bicillin L-A are available, the following actions are recommended:

1. Refrain from using Bicillin L-A for treatment of other infectious diseases (e.g., streptococcal pharyngitis) for which alternative effective antimicrobials are available.
2. Adhere to the recommended dosing regimen of 2.4 million units of Bicillin L-A intramuscularly for the treatment of primary, secondary, and early latent syphilis as outlined in the [2015 CDC STD Treatment Guidelines](#). Additional doses to treat early syphilis do not enhance efficacy, including in patients with HIV infection.
3. Doxycycline may be considered as an alternative treatment for syphilis. Please note the following:
  - a. Doxycycline is contraindicated in pregnant women and not recommended in children under 8 years old.
  - b. The dose for doxycycline is 100mg orally twice a day for 14 days for primary, secondary, and early latent syphilis, and 100mg orally twice a day for 28 days for late latent syphilis.
  - c. Follow-up clinical and serologic evaluation should be performed after syphilis treatment at the recommended intervals per [2015 CDC STD Treatment Guidelines](#).
4. Continue to report syphilis diagnoses to the Alameda County Public Health Department; details can be found on the [Disease Reporting and Control website](#).

**Resources:**

Information on syphilis treatment and clinical management can be found in the [2015 CDC STD Treatment Guidelines](#). CDC does not recommend any changes to these treatment guidelines for patients with syphilis during the current shortage.

Additional information on the availability of penicillin G benzathine can be found on the [CDC Bicillin L-A Shortage website](#) and on the [FDA's Drug Shortage website](#).

If you have any questions about the Bicillin L-A shortage, syphilis treatment, or accessing Bicillin L-A please contact the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) STD Control and Prevention Unit at (510) 267-3220.

Clinical questions related to the treatment of syphilis may also be directed to the California Department of Public Health STD Control Branch Clinician Warm Line at (510) 620-3400 or by an online consult to the national STD Clinical Consultation Network at [www.stdccn.org](http://www.stdccn.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Benzathine penicillin G is formulated for intramuscular use. Intravenous treatment with aqueous crystalline penicillin G is recommended for ocular and neurosyphilis in all patients, including pregnant women.