



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

August 31, 2023

Situational Update: Bicillin L-A

The nationwide shortage of penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A), first reported on April 26, 2023, is persisting. Pfizer is the sole supplier of Bicillin L-A, and currently anticipates that the issue will not be resolved until quarter 2 of 2024. The manufacturer is working closely with the CDC and FDA to address urgent requests. Some health care systems in San Francisco are now reporting critical shortages of Bicillin L-A.

Bicillin L-A is the only acceptable treatment for pregnant people infected with or exposed to syphilis and should be prioritized for babies exposed to syphilis in utero. Ideally, all people *capable* of pregnancy diagnosed with syphilis should receive Bicillin L-A.

Among non-pregnant adults, doxycycline 100 mg PO BID x 14 days is an acceptable alternative for those with primary, secondary, or early latent syphilis, and for those who have been exposed to a patient with infectious syphilis. Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID x 28 days is an acceptable alternative for those with late latent syphilis.

Given the ongoing shortages, it remains critical that limited inventory be used to treat patients for whom there is no alternative regimen or those unable to adhere to a multiday course of oral treatment. Other intramuscular formulations of penicillin (e.g. Bicillin C-R) are *not* acceptable alternatives for the treatment of syphilis.

Actions Requested of SF Providers

1. Prioritize penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A) for the following groups:

- Pregnant people with syphilis infection or exposure
- Partners of pregnant persons with syphilis
- Infants exposed to syphilis in utero
- Non-pregnant adults with syphilis of any stage who have a contraindication to doxycycline
- Non-pregnant adults with syphilis of any stage who are unlikely to adhere to a multi-day doxycycline regimen, for example persons experiencing homelessness or without a safe space to store medications, or who have shown difficulties in adhering to other medications

2. Contact nursing line at SF City Clinic at (628) 217-6695 if you are having trouble obtaining Bicillin L-A for prioritized persons.



3. When Bicillin L-A inventory is low:

- Use doxycycline 100 mg PO BID x 14 days for the treatment of non-pregnant adults with primary, secondary and early latent syphilis, and for those exposed to syphilis.
- Use doxycycline 100 mg PO BID x 28 days for the treatment of non-pregnant adults with late latent syphilis.

4. Conserve Bicillin L-A by using alternative drugs to treat group A strep pharyngitis and for primary rheumatic fever prophylaxis, e.g., penicillin V, amoxicillin, and azithromycin.

5. Check for updates on the [SF City Clinic website](#).

Additional Resources: Bicillin L-A

- [CDC announcements about the Bicillin L-A shortage](#)
- [FDA on Bicillin L-A shortage](#)
- [Clinical Reminders during Bicillin L-A® Shortage \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- [Health Advisory: Bicillin® L-A \(Benzathine Penicillin G\) Shortage \(ca.gov\)](#)

Program Contact Information

San Francisco City Clinic

Tel: (628) 217-6658

Email: oliver.bacon@sfdph.org

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