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

May 18, 2023

Situational Update: Bicillin L-A

The CDC has received reports that some clinical providers and public health departments are currently unable to procure enough penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A) to treat syphilis cases in their jurisdictions due to a manufacturing backlog. The manufacturer anticipates the issue will be resolved by Quarter 4 of 2023. The manufacturer is working closely with the CDC and FDA to address urgent requests.

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. Additionally, 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 infective syphilis. Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID x 28 days is an acceptable alternative for those with late latent syphilis.

Other intramuscular formulations of penicillin (e.g. Bicillin C-R) are not acceptable alternatives for the treatment of syphilis.

Actions Requested of SF Clinicians

1. Prioritize penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A) for pregnant people and people capable of pregnancy with syphilis infection or exposure, as well as for non-pregnant syphilis patients with primary, secondary, or early latent syphilis who are unlikely to adhere to a multi-day doxycycline regimen or who have a contraindication to doxycycline.

2. Contact SF City Clinic at (628) 217-7663 if you are having trouble obtaining Bicillin L-A.

3. If your stocks of Bicillin L-A are low, consider doxycycline for non-pregnant adults who are likely to adhere to a multi-day regimen.

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
• CDC STI Treatment Guidelines for Syphilis

Program Contact Information
San Francisco City Clinic
Tel: (628) 217-6674
Email: stephanie.cohen@sfdph.org

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