

BICILLIN L-A® (penicillin G benzathine) Shortage and Prioritization Update

Situation:

The Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) issued a [health alert](#) in 2023 recommending penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A®) prioritization for syphilis treatment in pregnant women and babies during a national shortage. The shortage is improving but anticipated to continue through 2024. Recently, after Pfizer reported a supply of 2.4 million units/4 milliliters of Bicillin L-A®, [CDC](#) recommended that all appropriate patients are treated for syphilis with Bicillin L-A®.

Updated TDH Recommendations:

Maintain an up-to-date inventory of Bicillin L-A®. If sufficient supply to treat all anticipated patients, please use Bicillin L-A® to treat patients diagnosed with syphilis who do not have a contraindication (e.g., allergy).

- **Primary, Secondary, or Early Latent Syphilis:** Bicillin L-A® 2.4 million units IM in a single dose.
- **Late Latent Syphilis or Syphilis of Unknown Duration:** Bicillin L-A® 7.2 million units total, administered as 3 doses of 2.4 million units IM each at 1-week intervals.

If Bicillin L-A® supply is insufficient to treat all anticipated patients, use an alternative regimen to treat non-pregnant patients. Doxycycline is an acceptable alternative when Bicillin L-A® is not available or contraindicated.

- **Primary, Secondary, or Early Latent Syphilis:** Doxycycline 100 mg orally twice daily for 14 days.
- **Late Latent Syphilis or Syphilis of Unknown Duration:** Doxycycline 100 mg orally twice daily for 28 days.

Please contact your [local health department](#) to arrange treatment for patients diagnosed with syphilis who do not have access to the recommended therapy.

Additional Considerations:

- Bicillin L-A® is the only recommended treatment for syphilis in pregnancy; no alternatives exist.
- To conserve stock, continue avoiding Bicillin L-A® treatment for other infections (e.g., streptococcal pharyngitis) where other effective antimicrobials are available.
- The FDA has allowed temporary importation and use of Extencilline and Lentocilin® (benzathine benzylpenicillin, for injection) to mitigate the effects of the Bicillin L-A® drug shortage.
- Clinicians with questions about syphilis clinical management can contact the National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers (NNPTC) STD Clinical Consultation Network (<https://www.stdccn.org>) or consult a local infectious disease specialist.

Resources:

- Refer to the [FDA Drug Shortages](#) website for the latest updates on drug supply availability.
- 2021 CDC STI treatment guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/syphilis.htm>
- Extencilline information: <https://www.fda.gov/media/175366/download>
- Lentocilin® information: <https://www.fda.gov/media/179787/download>

To report supply issues, please contact [CDC and Pfizer](#), and notify your [local health department](#). For more information, please contact STD.Health@tn.gov or call 615-741-7500.