HEALTH ADVISORY

UPDATE #2 PENICILLIN G BENZATHINE SHORTAGE SEPT 6, 2023

SITUATION:

This health advisory is to provide updates on the ongoing, nationwide shortage of penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin® L-A), first reported on April 26, 2023. Alameda County released a health advisory April 28 on this shortage. Pfizer is the sole supplier of Bicillin® L-A, and currently anticipates that the shortage will not be resolved until quarter 2 of 2024. Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) has not been informed of shortages, but healthcare systems in San Francisco have reported critical shortages of penicillin G benzathine.

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.

Given the ongoing shortages, it is important supplies 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. Doxycycline is an acceptable alternative for non-pregnant adults with primary, secondary, or early and late latent syphilis, and for those who have been exposed to a patient with infectious syphilis.

ACTIONS REQUESTED OF HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS:

1. Use penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin® L-A) for:
   - Pregnant people with syphilis infection or exposure
   - 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 without a safe space to store medications, or who have shown difficulties in adhering to other medications.

2. Use doxycycline for syphilis treatment in non-pregnant adults and those without other reasons to use Bicillin® L-A
   - Use doxycycline 100 mg PO BID x 14 days for the treatment of 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.

3. Use alternative antimicrobials to treat group A strep pharyngitis and for primary rheumatic fever prophylaxis, e.g., penicillin V, amoxicillin, and azithromycin.

4. Monitor your inventory of penicillin G benzathine and report if you do not have supplies to treat prioritized persons. Please notify ACPHD SexualHealth@acgov.org of shortage(s) or low inventories of Bicillin © L-A. Requests for Bicillin® L-A should provide the purpose, and be submitted to ACPHD SexualHealth@acgov.org.
RESOURCES:

SFDPH Updated Health Advisory Penicillin G Benzathine (Bicillin L-A) Shortage
CDC announcements about the Bicillin L-A Shortage
CDC Clinical Reminders during Bicillin L-A Shortage
FDA on Bicillin L-A Shortage
Health Advisory: Bicillin L-A (Benzathine Penicillin G) Shortage (ca.gov)
Benzathine penicillin G (Bicillin L-A) Shortage Health Advisory April 28