



## Prioritize Bicillin® L-A to Treat Syphilis in Pregnant Persons Until Q4 2023

### Prescribe alternate drug doxycycline to treat syphilis in non-pregnant persons

An increase in syphilis infection, including in pregnant persons and congenital syphilis in infants, created a higher demand for long-acting Bicillin (benzathine penicillin G).

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) STD Control Branch (STDCB) issued a [health advisory](#) on June 1, 2023 about the Bicillin L-A shortage due to the increase in demand. The advisory follows the guidelines from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

The Bicillin L-A drug shortage is expected to last until fourth quarter (Q4) 2023. You can monitor the shortage on the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) webpage.

### Prioritize treatment of syphilis in pregnant persons

CHPH STDCB recommends the following when prioritizing treatment with Bicillin L-A:

- Pregnant people infected with or exposed to syphilis – Bicillin L-A is the only recommended treatment.
- Infants exposed to syphilis in utero – Timely treatment with Bicillin L-A is almost 100% effective at preventing bad outcomes of congenital syphilis in infants.
- Persons with contraindications to doxycycline (e.g., anaphylaxis, hemolytic anemia, Stevens Johnson syndrome).

### Treat syphilis with doxycycline for non-pregnant adults

Follow the recommended use and dosage of doxycycline as an acceptable alternative.

The dosage of doxycycline is **100 mg orally twice per day** for people with:

- Primary, secondary, or early latent syphilis – taken for 14 days.
- Late latent syphilis or syphilis of unknown duration – taken for 28 days.

Note: Use of other intramuscular formulations of penicillin, including Bicillin C-R, are not acceptable alternatives for the treatment of syphilis.

#### THIS UPDATE APPLIES TO:

- Physicians
- Hospitals
- Independent Practice Associations

#### PROVIDER SERVICES

866-999-3945

#### PROVIDER PORTAL

[provider.wellcare.com/california](http://provider.wellcare.com/california)

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### **Questions or help with Bicillin L-A**

For issues with shortages or obtaining Bicillin L-A medication, contact your local health department.

For clinical questions related to the treatment of syphilis during the Bicillin L-A shortage, please contact the STD Clinical Consultation Network, your local health department, or CDPH STDCB by phone at 510-620-3400 or by email at [stdcb@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:stdcb@cdph.ca.gov).

### **Additional information**

If you have questions regarding the information contained in this update, contact 866-999-3945.