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To: IEHP PCPs, OB/GYNs and Family Planning Providers

From: IEHP – Provider Relations

Date: September 20, 2023

Subject: **Bicillin® L-A shortage in California**

In early June, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released a [Health Advisory](#) informing providers of **long-acting penicillin G benzathine injectable suspension product (Bicillin® L-A) shortages**, along with acceptable alternatives (e.g., doxycycline), recommendations for Bicillin® L-A prioritization (e.g., pregnant people & infants), and conservation guidance (e.g., non-Bicillin® L-A based antimicrobials for non-syphilis infectious diseases). Regrettably, [updated estimates from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration](#) indicate inadequate Bicillin® L-A supplies at least until the 2nd quarter of 2024 due to increased demand and limited manufacturing capacity.

For more information, visit: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov> > Programs > Office of Communications > California Health Alert Network (CAHAN)

California has had increased syphilis diagnoses, especially in pregnant persons and congenital syphilis in infants. Up to 40% of infants born to pregnant people with untreated syphilis will be stillborn, suffer early infant death, or face morbidity, including blindness, deafness, and bone damage. Prompt treatment of syphilis in pregnancy is nearly 100% effective at preventing congenital syphilis.

Healthcare providers are recommended to use **alternatives such as Doxycycline 100 mg** in specific doses and other penicillin formulations for non-pregnant adults.

For non-pregnant adults:

- **Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID x 14 days is an acceptable alternative for those with primary, secondary, or early latent syphilis.**
- **Doxycycline 100 mg PO BID x 28 days is an acceptable alternative for those with late latent syphilis or syphilis of unknown duration.**

Regarding the Bicillin® L-A shortage, the California Department of Health (CDPH) STD Control branch recommends the following:

- **Prioritize Bicillin® L-A for pregnant people with syphilis infection (or exposure) and infants exposed to syphilis in utero.**
- **Prioritize Bicillin® L-A for patients with contraindications to doxycycline** (e.g., anaphylaxis, hemolytic anemia, Stevens Johnson syndrome).
- **Conserve Bicillin® L-A by using alternative drugs** to treat infectious diseases (e.g., streptococcal pharyngitis) where oral medications or other effective antimicrobials are available.
- **Contact your local health department** if you are experiencing a Bicillin® L-A shortage and/or having trouble obtaining the medication.

As a reminder, all IEHP communications can be found at: www.iehp.org > Providers > Plan Updates > Correspondence

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the IEHP Provider Call Center at (909) 890-2054, (866) 223-4347 or email ProviderServices@iehp.org