May 2017

TO: Local Health Departments, Community Health Centers; Urgent Care, Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine, Infectious Disease, Internal Medicine, Primary Care, Dermatology, Obstetrics and Gynecology, HIV Care Providers; Pharmacies

FROM: New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Sexually Transmitted Disease Prevention and Epidemiology

Health Advisory Update: Bicillin L-A® (Penicillin G Benzathine) and Penicillin G Procaine Shortages

This advisory is to update you on the status of the continuing shortages of Bicillin L-A® (penicillin G benzathine suspension) and Penicillin G procaine injectable suspension, both due to ongoing manufacturing issues.

**Bicillin L-A® (Penicillin G benzathine)**

Bicillin L-A® is the recommended treatment for syphilis infection, and is the only treatment option for pregnant women exposed to or infected with syphilis. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) first reported a national shortage on April 29, 2016.

**Penicillin G Procaine**

Penicillin G procaine is one of the recommended treatments for congenital syphilis infection. It is also an alternative treatment for both ocular syphilis and neurosyphilis. The FDA first reported a national shortage of all dosages on September 12, 2016. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), current availability of this drug is delayed due to prioritizing production of Bicillin L-A®.

**Status Update**

Both medications continue to experience delays in manufacturing. Pfizer (the manufacturer of both drugs in the US) estimates that supply is expected to improve over the next several months, with shortages resolving by the fourth quarter of 2017.

Until normal supplies of these drugs are available, it is critical to prioritize the use of Penicillin G benzathine to treat pregnant women exposed to or infected with syphilis. There are no acceptable alternatives for treating syphilis during pregnancy. CDC is not recommending any changes to treatment recommendation(s) for patients with syphilis.

If your practice, clinic or hospital routinely treats patients with syphilis, and you are experiencing a critical shortage of Penicillin G benzathine, please contact the Pfizer Supply Continuity Team at 844.646.4398, press 3.

If obtaining Penicillin G benzathine is a hardship for your practice or your patient, refer the patient (ideally with a copy of syphilis test results in hand) to your local county health department’s STD clinic (see link on next page). New York City residents can be directed to
any of the eight NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s (NYC DOHMH’s) Sexual Health Clinics.

**Recommended and Alternative Treatment for Congenital Syphilis, Ocular Syphilis and Neurosyphilis.**

As noted, there are alternative treatments for congenital syphilis as well as ocular syphilis and neurosyphilis. Providers are encouraged to refer to CDC’s 2015 STD Treatment Guidelines to determine if another course of treatment is appropriate. CDC is not recommending any changes to these treatment recommendations for patients with congenital, ocular, and neurosyphilis.

**Resources and For More Information**

If you have questions related to case management, call the NYS Clinical Education Initiative’s STD Center of Excellence at (866) 637-2342. Staff can provide expert medical consultation on diagnosis, treatment and management of syphilis.

Providers in New York City can contact the NYC DOHMH’s Bureau of STD Control at (347) 396-7200 to speak with a pharmacist about ordering Penicillin G benzathine or a clinician for consultation about clinical questions.

Providers outside of New York City can contact the NYS Department of Health Bureau of STD Prevention and Epidemiology at (518) 474-3598 or by e-mail at STDC@health.ny.gov for additional assistance.

- **Local Health Department STD Clinics:**

- **CDC 2015 STD Treatment Guidelines:**

- **FDA Drug Shortages Database (Search for Penicillin):**
  [https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/drugshortages/default.cfm](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/drugshortages/default.cfm)

- **Pfizer Supply Update Letter (April 3, 2017):**