



Government of the District of Columbia  
Department of Health



HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD and TB Administration

June 2, 2016

Dear District Providers:

Currently, the United States is experiencing a shortage of penicillin G benzathine, the recommended treatment for syphilis and the only recommended treatment for pregnant women infected or exposed to syphilis. Pfizer, the sole manufacturer of Bicillin L-A (brand name for penicillin G) in the US, is experiencing a manufacturing delay and is working with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of STD Prevention (DSTDP) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to resolve this situation. As a result of this shortage, I am asking that you notify the District of Columbia Department of Health (DOH) of your inventory so that we can monitor supply in the District.

Per CDC, Pfizer is releasing weekly allocations to wholesale distributors to prevent stock outs. Normal supplies are expected to resume by July 2016. Until normal quantities are available, DOH suggests the following:

**1. Take inventory.**

Please monitor your supply of Bicillin L-A<sup>®</sup> (penicillin G benzathine), and determine internal pattern of Bicillin use. Please notify us of your current inventory. Continue to contact distributors to procure Bicillin as appropriate. If product reaches a critical supply level of three weeks or less, please notify the DOH, as well as notify the Pfizer Supply Continuity Team at 844.804.4677 to inquire about an emergency supply.

**2. Implement a usage strategy.**

DOH discourages the use of Bicillin for treatment of other infectious diseases (e.g. streptococcal pharyngitis) where other effective antimicrobials are available. DOH encourages adherence to the recommended dosing regimen of 2.4 million units of Bicillin IM for the treatment of primary, secondary and early latent syphilis (early syphilis) as outlined in the [2015 STD Treatment Guidelines](#). (Additional doses to treat early syphilis do not enhance efficacy including patients living with HIV infection.) The DOH STD Clinic has given preference for Bicillin to high priority populations, including pregnant women infected or exposed to syphilis and individuals who are co-infected with HIV and syphilis.

**3. Utilize informational resources available.**

DOH encourages clinicians with questions about syphilis clinical management to contact an ID specialist, the on-line National Network of STD Clinical Prevention Training Centers (NNPTC) STD Clinical Consultation Network (<https://www.stdccn.org>) or DOH directly ([travis.gayles@dc.gov](mailto:travis.gayles@dc.gov)).

DOH will continue to work with the DSTDP to get additional updates and discuss procurement strategies to address this shortage. In turn, DOH will communicate these findings with you. In the interim, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at [travis.gayles@dc.gov](mailto:travis.gayles@dc.gov), or 202-671-4821.

Sincerely,  
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Chief Medical Officer  
Division Chief, STD-TB Control