



**This is an official
MS Health Alert Network (MSHAN) – Health Alert**

MESSAGE ID: MSHAN-20230509-00594-ALT (Health Alert)
RECIPIENTS: All Physicians, Hospitals, ERs, ICPs, NPs, PAs, and
Healthcare Providers – Statewide
Tuesday, May 9, 2023
SUBJECT: Bicillin L-A® Drug Shortage, Front-line Syphilis Treatment

Dear Colleagues,

- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently listed penicillin G benzathine suspension products (Bicillin L-A®) on the drug shortage list in the US due to increased demand ([FDA Drug Shortages](#)). While this shortage is expected to be temporary, the exact duration is unknown.
- As a reminder, Bicillin L-A® is the first line treatment for syphilis, and for some individuals, such as pregnant individuals, is the only recommended option for treatment for infection and exposure to syphilis.
- Mississippi continues to see high rates of primary and secondary syphilis, syphilis among pregnant women, and congenital syphilis. In 2021, Mississippi ranked:
 - 6th in the US for overall rate of primary and secondary syphilis (28 cases/100,000 population), and
 - 4th in the US for overall rate of congenital syphilis (182 cases/100,000 live births).
 - See [Tables \(cdc.gov\)](#) for 2021 Sexually Transmitted Disease Surveillance data from CDC.
- Recently, the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) updated the Rules and Regulations Governing Reportable Diseases and Conditions to require syphilis testing for all pregnant women in the first trimester (or initial prenatal care visit), with repeat testing in the third trimester, and again at the time of delivery. See the full Health Alert at [19786.pdf \(ms.gov\)](#).

Mississippi physician and provider recommendations while the Bicillin L-A® shortage is ongoing:

- Healthcare providers, hospitals and healthcare facilities should prioritize the use of Bicillin L-A® to treat pregnant people and children with congenital syphilis.
- For nonpregnant people, doxycycline 100 mg PO BID for two weeks (early syphilis of less than 1 year's duration) or for four weeks (late latent syphilis or syphilis of unknown duration) is an alternative for treatment for infection or syphilis exposure.
- **Syphilis Hotline:** The University of Mississippi Medical Center, in coordination with MSDH, has initiated a Syphilis Hotline to provide syphilis diagnostic and treatment guidance. Providers and healthcare facilities may call the Syphilis Hotline for guidance at 601-815-0538.



Additional Resources:

- [Syphilis - STI Treatment Guidelines \(cdc.gov\)](#)
- [Congenital Syphilis - STI Treatment Guidelines \(cdc.gov\)](#)

Please contact the MSDH Office of STD/HIV at 601-576-7723 with questions.

Regards,

Paul Byers, MD
State Epidemiologist



Alerting Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency:	Mississippi State Department of Health
Alerting Program:	MS Health Alert Network (MS HAN)
Message Identifier:	CDCHAN-20230509-00594- ALT
Program (HAN) Type:	Health Alert
Status (Type):	Actual ()
Message Type:	Message/Information
Reference:	MSHAN-00594
Severity:	Unknown
Acknowledgement:	No
Sensitive:	Not Sensitive
Message Expiration:	Undetermined
Urgency:	Undetermined
Delivery Time:	600 minutes

Definition of Alerting Vocabulary and Message Specification Settings

Originating Agency:	A unique identifier for the agency originating the alert.
Alerting Program:	The program sending the alert or engaging in alerts and communications using PHIN Communication and Alerting (PCA) as a vehicle for their delivery.
Message Identifier:	A unique alert identifier that is generated upon alert activation (MSHAN-yyymmdd-hhmm-TTT (ALT=Health Alert , ADV=Health Advisory , UPD=Health Update , MSG/INFO=Message/Info Service)).
Program (HAN) Type:	Categories of Health Alert Messages.
Health Alert:	Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
Health Advisory:	Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
Health Update:	Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.
Health Info Service:	Provides Message / Notification of general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.
Status (Type):	
Actual:	Communication or alert refers to a live event
Exercise:	Designated recipients must respond to the communication or alert
Test:	Communication or alert is related to a technical, system test and should be disregarded
Message Type:	
Alert:	Indicates an original Alert
Update:	Indicates prior alert has been Updated and/or superseded
Cancel:	Indicates prior alert has been cancelled



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Reference: For a communication or alert with a Message Type of “Update” or “Cancel”, this attribute contains the unique Message Identifier of the original communication or alert being updated or cancelled. “n/a” = Not Applicable.

Severity:

Extreme:	Extraordinary threat to life or property
Severe:	Significant threat to life or property
Moderate:	Possible threat to life or property
Minor:	Minimal threat to life or property
Unknown:	Unknown threat to life or property

Acknowledgement: Indicates whether an acknowledgement on the part of the recipient is required to confirm that the alert was received, and the timeframe in which a response is required (Yes or No).

Sensitive:

Sensitive:	Indicates the alert contains sensitive content
Not Sensitive:	Indicates non-sensitive content

Message Expiration:

Undetermined.

Urgency:

Undetermined. Responsive action should be taken immediately.

Delivery Time:

Indicates the timeframe for delivery of the alert (15, 60, 1440, 4320 minutes (.25, 1, 24, 72 hours)).