



**APRIL 27, 2017**

## **HEALTH ADVISORY**

### **CDC Update on Continued Shortage of Bicillin L-A®**

The CDC has alerted all state health departments and partners in sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention regarding an update on the ongoing shortage of **Penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A®)** in the United States. Pfizer, the sole manufacturer of Penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A®) in the United States, continues to experience a manufacturing delay of this product. Penicillin G benzathine (Bicillin L-A®) is the recommended treatment for syphilis and the only recommended treatment for pregnant women infected or exposed to syphilis. Pfizer is releasing allocations of the product to wholesale distributors and estimates that supply improvement is expected over the next several months. However, state health departments and partners in STD prevention are challenged by the current syphilis epidemic in the United States. Thus, with an estimated 33 percent increase of infectious syphilis cases from 2014-2016 nationally, orders are not keeping pace with projected syphilis treatment demands among patients and their sex partners. This increase of syphilis cases has also been seen in North Dakota. With over 60 cases of syphilis reported in 2016, this reflects a 42 percent increase in the number of cases from 2015 in N.D.

Please plan and forecast demand in your facility based on the rate of increase of syphilis cases in your jurisdiction. Report any shortages to the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) when inventory is less than two months of product based on projected use. Contacting Pfizer may also help your agency find wholesalers with available supply. Pfizer can be contacted at 800.533.4535.

Refer to the most recent STD Treatment Guidelines (<https://www.cdc.gov/std/tg2015/default.htm>) with questions about syphilis clinical management, or contact the NDDoH, STD program by calling 800.472.2180.

#### *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; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*

*This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, North Dakota EMS Association and hospital public information officers.*