NSW Health

UPDATED: Disruption to supply – benzathine benzylpenicillin (Bicillin L-A) suspension for injection pre-filled syringes

SAFETY NOTICE 018/25

Issue date:	14 August 2025
Content reviewed by:	Antimicrobial Stewardship Expert Advisory Committee, Centre for Population Health, Health Protection NSW, Medication Safety Expert Advisory Committee, Medication Shortage Assessment and Management Team
Distributed to:	Chief Executives, Directors of Clinical Governance
KEY MESSAGE:	NSW Health facilities are informed of the current disruption to the supply of benzathine benzylpenicillin injection products, availability of international alternatives, and clinical recommendations for managing this disruption to supply (including the need for urgent action to ensure remaining supply is reserved for priority indications).
ACTION REQUIRED BY:	Chief Executives, Directors of Clinical Governance
REQUIRED ACTION:	1. Distribute this Safety Notice to all relevant clinicians and clinical departments where benzathine benzylpenicillin injection products are held, prescribed, and administered, and include this Safety Notice in relevant handovers and safety huddles. 2. Undertake a local risk assessment and incorporate the below recommendations to manage the disruption to supply. Ensure a system is in place to document actions taken in response to this Safety Notice. 3. Report any incidents associated with this disruption to supply into the local incident management system, for example, ims+.
We recommend you also inform:	Directors, Managers and Staff of: • Infectious Diseases, Microbiology and Sexual Health • Cardiology Departments • Public Health Units • Emergency Departments • Intensive Care Units • Relevant outpatient clinics (such as Sexual Health clinics) • Medical Services • Nursing and Midwifery Services • Pharmacy Services Drug and Therapeutics Committees All other relevant clinicians, departments and committees
Website:	https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sabs/Pages/default.aspx http://internal.health.nsw.gov.au/quality/sabs/index.html
Review date:	January 2026

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What has been updated from SN:016/25?

This Safety Notice replaces SN:016/25 *Disruption to supply – benzathine benzylpenicillin (Bicillin L-A) suspension for injection pre-filled syringes,* which has now been **rescinded**. Key updates in this Safety Notice include the addition of information regarding further international alternatives from Portugal and Canada available under Section 19A (S19A) of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*. The Portugal alternative contains **lidocaine 1.5% as the solvent**, and there are important safety considerations related to its use.

Situation

Due to manufacturing reasons, there is a current disruption to the supply of the following Australian-registered products:

- benzathine benzylpenicillin (Bicillin L-A) 1,200,000 units/2.3 mL suspension for injection pre-filled syringe until **30 September 2025**
- benzathine benzylpenicillin (Bicillin L-A) 600,000 units/1.17 mL suspension for injection pre-filled syringe until **31 October 2025**.

There is also a disruption to supply of the following benzathine benzylpenicillin products approved under Section 19A (S19A) of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*:

- benzathine benzylpenicillin (EXTENCILLINE®) 1,200,000 units, powder and solvent for suspension for IM injection from France (approval holder ORSPEC Pharma)
- benzathine benzylpenicillin (Brancaster Pharma®) 1,200,000 units, powder and solvent for suspension for injection from the UK (approval holder ORSPEC Pharma)
- benzathine benzylpenicillin (Lentocilin S®) 1,200,000 units powder and solvent for suspension for injection from Portugal (approval holder Neon Healthcare)
- benzathine benzylpenicillin (Bicillin L-A®) 1,200,000 units/2 mL syringe from Canada (approval holder Reach Pharmaceuticals).

International alternatives are also available through the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) Special Access Scheme (SAS) from France and the United Kingdom via ORSPEC Pharma and Medsurge, and from Spain via ORSPEC Pharma.

NSW Health staff are advised to check the TGA website for updates regarding further changes to supply and the TGA S19A approvals database for updates on further S19A alternatives.

Background

Benzathine benzylpenicillin is an antimicrobial indicated for the treatment of infections caused by penicillin-sensitive micro-organisms that are susceptible to low and prolonged serum levels. It is also indicated for prophylaxis to prevent serious conditions that follow these infections.

Benzathine benzylpenicillin is restricted on the NSW Medicines Formulary for *'use in accordance with the local antimicrobial stewardship policy'*.

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Assessment

Given both the Australian-registered benzathine benzylpenicillin products, and those approved for supply under S19A by the TGA are currently in limited supply:

Urgent action is required to ensure that the remaining supply of benzathine benzylpenicillin product is reserved for priority indications where alternatives are not readily available or suitable.

Additionally, where accessible, the S19A and SAS alternatives included in **Appendix A** have important safety considerations due to differences in presentation, volume of administration, and storage requirements compared to the Australian-registered product. Refer to **Appendix A** for details on differences between the Australian-registered product and the international alternatives.

Please note that the following S19A alternatives require reconstitution prior to administration:

- EXTENCILLINE (available from France via ORSPEC Pharma)
- Brancaster Pharma (available from the UK via ORSPEC Pharma)
- Lentocilin S (available from Portugal via Neon Pharmaceuticals).

The S19A alternative, Lentocilin S, is supplied with a glass ampoule containing 4 mL of **1.5% lidocaine solution for injection** as the solvent for each 1,200,000-unit vial. As lidocaine 1.5% is a Schedule 4 medicine, its use must be documented separately by the prescriber (either as part of a medication order or as a prescription) in addition to the order for Lentocilin S. To reduce prescribing and administration risks, clinicians should **discard the supplied lidocaine** and instead reconstitute Lentocilin S with **4 mL water for injection**, which does not require a separate prescription.

If use of lidocaine as the reconstitution solvent is deemed clinically appropriate, clinicians must ensure compliance with the NSW Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008, NSW Health Policy Directive *Medication Handling* (PD2022_032), and local protocols to meet prescription and documentation requirements for Schedule 4 medicines.

Please note that if the lidocaine solvent is utilised, caution is recommended in the following circumstances:

- Hypersensitivity to lidocaine or amide type local anaesthetics **(contraindicated)**.
- Presence of cardiovascular, hepatic or renal dysfunction, inflammation and/or infection at the injection site.
- Children, elderly patients, and patients with acute illnesses or debilitated.
- Patients on concomitant central nervous system (CNS) depressant drugs.

Recommendations

- All remaining supply of benzathine benzylpenicillin products held by NSW Health facilities is to be **prioritised for the following conditions**:
  - Treatment for definite, probable and possible acute rheumatic fever.
  - Secondary prophylaxis of acute rheumatic fever and/or rheumatic heart disease.
  - Patients who require treatment for group-A streptococcal infection of the respiratory tract and skin who are at high risk of acute rheumatic fever, rheumatic heart disease or Acute Poststreptococcal Glomerulonephritis (APSGN), where oral therapy is not acceptable or the likelihood of non-adherence is high.
  - Pregnant patients requiring treatment for syphilis in proven or suspected cases, or if identified as a sexual contact of syphilis.
- Where patients fall outside the above priority conditions and settings, prescribers should seek advice from Infectious Diseases, Microbiology, or Sexual Health services and/or refer to the Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic (including the Antibiotic prescribing in primary care: Therapeutic Guidelines summary table 2024) for alternative antimicrobials in indications not identified as a priority. **This includes non-pregnant patients requiring treatment for syphilis in proven or suspected cases and their recent sexual contacts.**
  - For patients outside of the priority indications where compliance may be a concern, treatment with benzathine benzylpenicillin may still be warranted.
  - For patients treated with or transitioned to doxycycline, review post-treatment to ensure complete symptom resolution and that a four-fold drop in Rapid Plasma Reagin (RPR) is achieved in 12 months. If this is not achieved, consult with a specialist.
- Where available and clinically acceptable, S19A or SAS alternatives are to be used to reserve supply of the Australian-registered benzathine benzylpenicillin (Bicillin L-A) for community patients to access via the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).
- Consider the appropriateness of the S19A or SAS alternatives for each patient with reference to the information provided in **Appendix A**. Particular attention is drawn to:
  - The total volume required to administer a 1,200,000-unit dose and the acceptability of this volume in paediatric patients.
  - The presence of **soy lecithin (also present in ARTG product)** which is not suitable for use in patients with an allergy to soy or peanuts.
  - The clinical appropriateness and prescription requirements for the use of **lidocaine 1.5% solution for injection** as the solvent for the Lentocilin S branded alternative OR use of water for injection as a substitute. Where possible, clinicians should discard the lidocaine solvent included with the packaging and instead reconstitute with 4 mL water for injection.
- Continue to dose benzathine benzylpenicillin according to the Australian-registered Product Information and evidence-based resources such as the Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic, in accordance with the local antimicrobial stewardship policy. Ensure aseptic technique and infection prevention and control practices are maintained when preparing any benzathine

benzylpenicillin product, as outlined in the NSW Health Policy Directive *Infection Prevention and Control in Healthcare Settings* (PD2023_025).

- Develop a local plan to manage the disruption to the supply of benzathine benzylpenicillin that includes (but is not limited to):
    - Assessing the current status and availability of benzathine benzylpenicillin products in each facility, ensuring all locations where stock is held are identified.
    - Determining ongoing clinical needs and the ability to obtain alternative supply.
    - Place back orders with regular wholesalers or suppliers to ensure supply of the S19A or SAS alternatives is received as it becomes available.

Further information

- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (2024). *Safety considerations during benzathine benzylpenicillin (Bicillin L-A) supply disruption*.
    - *Please note that while the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care considers the treatment of syphilis as a priority indication, the NSW Health recommendation is to consider suitable alternative antimicrobial agents for non-pregnant patients, unless otherwise specified in the recommendations outlined above.*
- Therapeutic Goods Administration (2025.) *About the 2024-2025 shortage of Bicillin L-A (benzathine benzylpenicillin tetrahydrate) prefilled syringe for injection*.

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Appendix A: Comparison of Australian-registered product and international alternatives

	Australian-registered product **Bicillin L-A®**	*International alternative (Canada)* **Bicillin L-A®**	*International alternative (France)* **EXTENCILLINE®**	*International alternative (UK)* **Brancaster Pharma®**	*International alternative (Spain)* **Benzetacil®**	*International alternative (Portugal)* **Lentocilin S®**
Supply arrangements	Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG)	S19A via Reach Pharmaceuticals	S19A via ORSPEC Pharma SAS via Medsurge	S19A via ORSPEC Pharma SAS via Medsurge and Pro Pharmaceuticals Group	SAS via ORSPEC Pharma	S19A via Neon Pharmaceuticals
Active ingredient	Benzathine benzylpenicillin tetrahydrate 1,200,000 units	Benzathine benzylpenicillin tetrahydrate (penicillin G benzathine) 1,200,000 units	Benzathine benzylpenicillin 1,200,000 units			
Presentation	White fluid suspension for injection in a glass pre-filled syringe	Suspension for injection in pre-filled syringe	Powder (white/whitish) and solvent (clear diluent) for suspension for injection	Powder (white/off white) and solvent (clear diluent) for suspension for injection	Powder (white/whitish) and solvent (clear diluent) for suspension for injection	Powder (white or almost white) and solvent (clear and almost colourless) for suspension for injection
Excipients	• Sodium citrate • Water for injections • Soya bean products (lecithin)# • Carmellose sodium • Povidone • Methyl hydroxybenzoate • Propyl hydroxybenzoate	• Lecithin# • Methylparaben • Povidone • Propylparaben • Sodium carboxymethyl-cellulose • Sodium citrate • Water for injection	Powder vial: • Carmellose sodium • Anhydrous sodium citrate • Povidone • Soyabean phospholipids (originating from lecithin)#	Powder vial: • Soya lecithin# • Polysorbate 80 • Carmellose sodium • Sodium citrate, anhydrous • Povidone	Powder vial: • Polysorbate 80 • Lecithin# • Sodium (trisodium) citrate (E-331)	Powder vial: • Sodium citrate • Lecithin# • Polysorbate 80
	# The presence of lecithin makes these products NOT suitable for patients with an allergy to soy or peanuts.					

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	Australian-registered product **Bicillin L-A®**	*International alternative (Canada)* **Bicillin L-A®**	*International alternative (France)* **EXTENCILLINE®**	*International alternative (UK)* **Brancaster Pharma®**	*International alternative (Spain)* **Benzetacil®**	*International alternative (Portugal)* **Lentocilin S®**
Included solvent	N/A	N/A	Water for injection	Water for injection	Water for injection	Lidocaine hydrochloride 1.5% solution
Volume required to administer a 1,200,000 unit dose	1,200,000 units = 2.3 mL	1,200,000 units = 2 mL	1,200,000 units = 4 mL of water for injection plus powder displacement volume*	1,200,000 units = 3.5 mL of water for injection plus powder displacement volume*	1,200,000 units = 4 mL of water for injection plus powder displacement volume (final volume is **4.8 mL**)*	1,200,000 units = 4 mL of **solution/diluent** plus powder displacement volume*
			*Shake the suspension thoroughly for at least 20 seconds until a homogenous suspension is obtained, then **use the suspension immediately after preparation**			
Route	**Intramuscular (IM) injection ONLY**					
Doses per pack	• 10 (individual pre-filled syringes)		• 1 x glass vial of powder for suspension • 1 x glass ampoule containing 5 mL water for injection	• 1 x vial of powder for suspension • 1 x glass ampoule containing 5 mL water for injection	• 1 x glass vial of powder for suspension • 1 x glass ampoule containing 4 mL water for injection	• 1 x glass vial of powder for suspension • 1 x glass ampoule **containing 4 mL of lidocaine 1.5% solution** (see additional notes)
Labelled language	English	English and French	French	English	English and Spanish	English or Spanish (dependent on batch received)

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	Australian-registered product **Bicillin L-A®**	*International alternative (Canada)* **Bicillin L-A®**	*International alternative (France)* **EXTENCILLINE®**	*International alternative (UK)* **Brancaster Pharma®**	*International alternative (Spain)* **Benzetacil®**	*International alternative (Portugal)* **Lentocilin S®**
	• Store at 2 to 8°C (refrigerate, do not freeze). • May be stored below 30°C, for a single period of up to 2 months, prior to expiry. Refer to the Product Information for further details.	• Store at 2 to 8°C (refrigerate, do not freeze). • May be stored below 30°C for 7 days.	• Store below 25°C • Reconstituted suspension must be immediately used			
Additional notes		Backorders must be placed to receive stock as it becomes available.	ORSPEC Pharma (S19A) – note product expiry date 30/10/2025. Medsurge (SAS) – lead time of 18 business days.	Medsurge (SAS) – lead time of 18 business days.	ORSPEC Pharma (SAS) – lead time of 7 – 10 business days.	Lead time of 7 – 14 business days. Where possible, clinicians should discard the lidocaine solvent included with the packaging and instead reconstitute with 4 mL water for injection.
Product image/artwork