



Safety Notice 011/19

Benzylpenicillin injection – Disruption to supply

14 August 2019

Distributed to:

- Chief Executives
- Directors of Clinical Governance
- Director Regulation and Compliance Unit

Action required by:

- Chief Executives
- Directors of Clinical Governance

We recommend you also inform:

- Heads of departments
- Directors of Medical Services
- Directors of Pharmacy
- Directors of Nursing and Midwifery
- Infectious Diseases Physicians
- Drugs and Therapeutics Committees
- AMS Committees

Expert Reference Group

Content reviewed by:

- Office of the Chief Health Officer, MoH
- Chief Pharmacist Unit, MoH
- Clinical Excellence Commission
- AMS Expert Advisory Committee

Clinical Excellence Commission

Tel. 02 9269 5500
Fax. 02 9269 5599

Email:
CEC-MedicationSafety@health.nsw.gov.au

Internet Website:
<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/sabs>

Intranet Website
<http://internal.health.nsw.gov.au/quality/sabs/>

Review date

14 August 2020

Background

There is an anticipated disruption to the supply of benzylpenicillin (BenPen®) 1.2 g and 600 mg intravenous preparations. This disruption is a result of a global shortage of the active pharmaceutical ingredient. BenPen® is the only brand of benzylpenicillin registered in Australia.

The anticipated stock outage dates are:

- 23 September to 30 November 2019 for the 1.2 g injection
- 25 November 2019 to 13 January 2020 for the 600 mg injection
- No outage dates have been proposed for the 3 g injection

Benzylpenicillin is a narrow spectrum antibiotic, recommended as first line treatment for a variety of bacterial infections.

Alternative benzylpenicillin products are accessible via the Special Access Scheme (SAS) and obtainable from Link and Medsurge. Other supply options are also being investigated. However, as this is a global shortage, suppliers may not be able to supply volumes to meet normal demand. Therefore, to manage a potential shortfall, hospitals must conserve stock and implement measures to control use of benzylpenicillin injection.

Note: Benzathine benzylpenicillin (Bicillin L-A®) and procaine benzylpenicillin (procaine penicillin) (Cilicaine®) supply have not been affected.

Further information

For details of supply options, email: HSNSW-contact902@health.nsw.gov.au

There is [advice on alternative therapy](#) to benzylpenicillin from the National Centre for Antimicrobial Stewardship (NCAS). Refer to the Australian Medicines Handbook and Therapeutic Guidelines (eTG complete) for further advice on precautions associated with alternative antibiotic choices. Both are accessible from [CIAP](#).

Suggested actions by Local Health Districts/Networks

1. Distribute this notice to all relevant staff and all clinical departments.
2. Assess the current status of intravenous (IV) benzylpenicillin preparations available in each facility, ensuring all locations of stock are identified.
3. Strategies to manage the shortage of benzylpenicillin should be planned and implemented at a local level by the facility/LHD Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) and/or Drug and Therapeutics Committee. These measures should include (after risk assessment at the local level):
 - Remove and quarantine stock from clinical areas where IV benzylpenicillin preparations are not routinely used.
 - Reduce and minimise stock levels from clinical areas where IV benzylpenicillin preparations are routinely used.
 - Reserve stock of IV benzylpenicillin preparations for infective conditions where it is the only available option (e.g. endocarditis being treated in Hospital in the Home, tertiary or congenital syphilis)
 - Review prescriptions for IV benzylpenicillin and assess whether an alternative antibiotic, or switching to oral therapy, is appropriate.
 - Use alternative antibiotic options; consult your infectious diseases (ID), clinical microbiology or AMS services for advice. NCAS (<https://www.ncas-australia.org/education>) have released advice on alternatives.
4. Inform relevant staff when supply of IV benzylpenicillin preparations returns to normal.
5. Ensure a system is in place to document actions taken.
6. Confirm receipt of this notice to CEC-MedicationSafety@health.nsw.gov.au