



**BC Centre for Disease Control**  
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## Bicillin<sup>®</sup> L-A for Treatment of Syphilis

**Bicillin<sup>®</sup> L-A (long-acting penicillin G benzathine)** is the preferred antibiotic treatment for syphilis. It is given by intramuscular injection in two divided doses into each hip/buttock muscle at the same visit.

**Bicillin<sup>®</sup> L-A 2.4 million units x 1 dose** is usually adequate to treat early syphilis. However, if the infection has been present for more than one year, or is of unknown duration, then three consecutive, weekly injections of Bicillin<sup>®</sup> L-A 2.4 million units are needed.

### Allergies

- Tell your health care provider if you have antibiotic allergies to penicillins (e.g., Penicillin-V-K and Amoxicillin) or cephalosporins (e.g., cefixime (Suprax<sup>®</sup>), cephalexin Cefaclor<sup>®</sup>).

### Pregnancy/Breastfeeding

- Please consult your healthcare provider if you are breastfeeding.
- If you are diagnosed with syphilis while you are pregnant or breastfeeding, it is very important that you receive treatment.
- If you are being treated for syphilis in the second half of your pregnancy, please discuss special considerations with your healthcare provider.

### CAUTION

- **Drug Interactions:** Please note that individual drug interactions are no longer listed in this document. **If you are on any oral, inhaled, injectable, intravenous medications or herbal supplements, please discuss with your healthcare provider.**
- **For drug interaction queries,** healthcare providers can call or access:
  - BCCDC Pharmacy ph. 604-707-2580
  - Any community pharmacy
  - <http://reference.medscape.com/drug-interactionchecker>

### Care of Yourself Following Treatment

- You will be asked to wait in the clinic for 15 minutes after your Bicillin injections.
- If you have any reaction following treatment (e.g., rash, itchiness, or breathing difficulties), please inform a staff member immediately.
- If these symptoms occur after leaving the clinic, please seek emergency care immediately.

## Bicillin<sup>®</sup> L-A for Treatment of Syphilis (cont'd)

### Side Effects

- You may experience mild, temporary pain at the injection site
- You may experience diarrhea following treatment.
- **Jarisch-Herxheimer reaction:** fever, chills, headache, or fatigue.
  - A Jarisch-Herxheimer reaction is a set of temporary side effects that may occur within 2-12 hours after treatment of early syphilis; although not everyone will have this reaction.
  - Do not be alarmed, this is **not an allergic response** and usually ends in 24 hrs.
  - Take acetaminophen, aspirin, or ibuprofen if needed to help relieve symptoms.
  - This reaction rarely occurs after treatment of late syphilis.
- If any of these effects persist or worsen, please contact your healthcare provider.

### Blood Donation

- According to Canadian Blood Services (CBS), it is acceptable to donate blood if it has been a minimum of 12 months since completion of treatment for syphilis. CBS tests all donated blood and if a blood sample tests positive for syphilis, it will be automatically discarded.

### Early Syphilis vs Late Syphilis

Treatment and follow-up recommendations are based on how long the syphilis infection has been present in your body. Your healthcare provider will inform you if you have early syphilis or late syphilis, and what treatment is required.

- **Treatment**
- **Special Instructions**
- **Partner Follow-up**
- **Follow-up Testing**

See Table next page

If you have any questions or need more information, please visit [www.smartsexresource.com](http://www.smartsexresource.com) or contact your healthcare provider.

## Bicillin<sup>®</sup> L-A for Treatment of Syphilis (cont'd)

	□ EARLY SYPHILIS	□ LATE LATENT SYPHILIS
<b>Definition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have symptoms such as a genital/mouth sore or rash</li> <li>• May not have any symptoms, but can still be contagious</li> <li>• Duration of infection: less than one year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Hidden” infection; no symptoms and not contagious, but can cause internal damage if not treated</li> <li>• Duration of infection: more than one year or unknown duration</li> </ul>
<b>Treatment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bicillin<sup>®</sup> L-A 2.4 million units x 1 dose</b></li> <li>• Given in divided doses of 1.2 million units by injection into each hip/buttock muscle at the same visit</li> <li>• Additional sets of Bicillin LA<sup>®</sup> may be indicated in some cases such as pregnancy, HIV co-infection</li> <li>• If you have symptoms of syphilis such as a sore or rash, these should disappear within 2-4 weeks.</li> <li>• If the symptoms have not resolved within this time, see your healthcare provider.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bicillin<sup>®</sup> L-A 2.4 million units x 3 sets of injections; given weekly (7days apart) for 3 weeks.</b></li> <li>• Given in divided doses of 1.2 million units by injection into each hip/buttock muscle at the same visit</li> <li>• Complete treatment = 7.2 million units over three weeks.</li> </ul>
<b>Partner Notification and Follow-up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All sexual partners within 3 months before your diagnosis require treatment, testing and examination as a contact to early syphilis.</b></li> <li>• <b>Sexual partners from 3 to 12 months before your diagnosis, require testing and examination.</b></li> <li>• Your healthcare provider or a public health nurse will contact you to discuss partner notification options and follow-up.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All long term sexual partners and children</b> of an infected mother, <b>require testing</b> (syphilis blood test).</li> <li>• Your healthcare provider or a public health nurse will contact you to confirm the necessary follow-up.</li> </ul>
<b>Special Instructions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Do not have sex until 2 weeks (i.e.,14 days) after your treatment</b></li> <li>• Ensure your sex partner(s), that is, anyone that you have given or received oral, anal or vaginal sex with, in the past three months, have been treated for syphilis, even if their test results are negative</li> <li>• Tell your health care provider if you have sex:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ with an untreated partner or</li> <li>○ before either you or your partner(s) treatment is complete.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Do not have sex until 2 weeks (i.e.,14 days) after starting your treatment</b></li> <li>• It is very important to complete the entire three weeks of treatment to treat the infection and prevent complications.</li> </ul>
<b>Follow-up Blood Tests</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every 3-6 months, depending on risk of re-infection. Discuss with your healthcare provider how often is best for you to retest.</li> <li>• Note: your syphilis EIA screening test will usually remain positive (reactive) for life. The syphilis RPR should drop slowly after treatment. If this does not occur, re-treatment may be necessary. Your healthcare provider will advise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations for follow-up testing will be discussed by your healthcare provider at your last treatment visit.</li> <li>• Note: your syphilis EIA screening test will usually remain positive (reactive) for life. Additional blood tests will be done to ensure the infection is fully treated.</li> </ul>