

Pfizer warns of looming shortage of long-acting penicillin for kids

June 16 2023, by Cara Murez



Pfizer Inc. warned doctors this week of an impending shortage of

Bicillin, its long-acting, injectable form of penicillin.

The medication is not commonly used for children because alternatives such as amoxicillin are preferred over the Bicillin shot, the company explained in a [statement](#). So, while production issues are ongoing, Pfizer plans to prioritize the medication for [adults](#), for whom Bicillin is recommended for treating [syphilis](#), a sexually transmitted disease.

Syphilis rates have been increasing, up by more than 30% in 2021, according to the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

All of this means that although Bicillin for adults may be in short supply, it's not expected to be unavailable. However, the pediatric version of the drug will likely run out by the end of June, *CNN* reported.

"The adult formulation of Bicillin L-A is the most important, as that is the only product available to treat pregnant patients with syphilis," [Erin Fox](#), a pharmacist at the University of Utah who tracks [drug shortages](#), told *CNN*.

Syphilis can pass from a [pregnant woman](#) to her fetus, killing up to half of infected babies shortly before or after birth, *CNN* reported. It can also cause blindness and deafness.

"This is a long-acting form of penicillin: You can just get one to two shots, and then you're done, versus taking amoxicillin for five to seven days," Fox said, referring to using the medication for children.

However, the shots are painful and "nobody likes to use them unless you have to," Fox said.

The issues with Bicillin stem from shortages of amoxicillin last fall, *CNN* reported, because [doctors](#) used Bicillin in its place and Pfizer has

not been able to increase production fast enough.

The FDA said it "recognizes the potential impact that lack of availability of certain products may have on [health care providers](#) and patients," in a statement, *CNN* reported.

"While the agency does not manufacture drugs and cannot require a pharmaceutical company to make a drug, make more of a drug, or change the distribution of a drug, the public should rest assured the FDA is working closely with numerous manufacturers and others in the [supply chain](#) to understand, mitigate and prevent or reduce the impact of intermittent or reduced availability of certain products," the FDA said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [syphilis](#).

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