

October 1, 2024

Bulletin: Penicillin and the Home Birth Supplies Program

Situation: The Product Distribution Center (PDC) is reporting a national shortage of penicillin G and is collaborating with the Home Birth Supplies Program (HBSP) to work with their vendors to gain access to available product and to find appropriate substitutions.

Background:

In the context of the HBSP, penicillin G is provided for intrapartum antibiotic prophylaxis for the prevention of infant Group B Streptococcal disease (GBS).

The HBSP provides penicillin G 5 million unit vials for IV administration.

When shortages began in August 2024 the PDC was able to procure additional vials through our provincial partnerships however that is no longer an option. Alternative options have been proposed and there are no 5 million unit vial options.

Assessment:

There is no availability of 5 million unit vials of penicillin until an estimated timeframe of early February 2025.

Substitute provided: Penicillin G 10 million unit vial

As soon as available, the HBSP will return to 5 million unit vials.

Request and Response:

Ordering: Order penicillin based on identified client need and do not order solely to replace expired vials.

Substitute: Familiarize yourself with preparing the appropriate doses of penicillin using the alternative 10 million unit vials. Review your health authority's parenteral drug therapy manual for further instructions.

Reconstitute as the label directs, mark on the vial the date/ time of reconstitution, store it in the fridge and it can be used for repeat dosing within 24 hours.

The protocol is 5 million units IV initial dose. 2.5 million – 3 million units IV every 4 hours until birth.

Resources and References:

Penicillin G sodium. Adult Parenteral Drug Therapy Manual. BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre, Providence Health Care and Vancouver Coastal Health. July 5, 2021. [NAME OF DRUG \(vch.ca\)](#)

No. 298 – The Prevention of Early-Onset Neonatal Group B Streptococcal Disease. Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada. August 2018.

BCRM Ref Mobile Application. Midwives Association of British Columbia.

Contact:

[Lisa Sutherland](#) RM, IBCLC, Provincial Midwifery Lead, PSBC

