



KAREN L. SMITH, MD, MPH  
Director and State Public Health Officer

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency  
California Department of Public Health



EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
Governor

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Dear Health Care Provider,

The California Department of Public Health STD Control Branch is partnering with local health departments to improve both the reporting and quality of the treatment of gonorrhea cases. We are undertaking this project to address concerns about antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea. Effective STD program interventions are needed to identify where treatment adherence falls short of recommended treatment regimens.

Due to the risk of decreasing susceptibility of gonorrhea to cephalosporin antibiotics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that medical providers treat uncomplicated gonorrhea infections with dual antibiotic therapy:

**Ceftriaxone** 250 mg intramuscular (IM)  
*plus*  
**Azithromycin** 1 gm orally in a single dose

The current guidelines recommend **dual antibiotic therapy administered concurrently** to improve treatment efficacy and prevent the emergence of antibiotic resistance. This recommendation is based on experience using combination antibiotics that have different mechanisms of action to treat other organisms which have potential to develop resistance.

Assuring correct treatment for gonorrhea may be one of the most important strategies for preventing the emergence of antibiotic-resistant gonorrhea. We encourage health care organizations and medical directors to assist with implementation of these dual treatment recommendations. Specifically, we are encouraging review of clinic protocols and revisions as necessary to ensure that patients returning for gonorrhea treatment receive both recommended medications, even if they have recently received azithromycin for presumptive treatment of anogenital symptoms.

In this era of concern about emerging gonorrhea drug resistance, it is also important to be aware of the potential for treatment failure. Please refer to our website for additional information about treatment failure at the [CDPH Gonorrhea Treatment Guidelines and Management of Suspected Treatment Failure pdf](https://archive.cdph.ca.gov/pubsforms/Guidelines/Documents/CAGCTreatmentFailureProtocol.pdf) (<https://archive.cdph.ca.gov/pubsforms/Guidelines/Documents/CAGCTreatmentFailureProtocol.pdf>).

Sincerely,

Heidi Bauer, MD, MS, MPH  
Chief, STD Control Branch

