**What is penicillin G procaine?**
Penicillin G procaine is an antibiotic that is given by injection into a muscle. It is approved to treat bacterial infections in many different parts of the body. It does not work to treat viral infections, such as the common cold.

**Is penicillin G procaine approved for anthrax?**
Penicillin G procaine is approved to treat anthrax in all its forms (inhaled (lung), skin, stomach and intestinal).

**Can medicines in the same class as penicillin G procaine (e.g., amoxicillin, or ampicillin) be used to prevent or treat anthrax?**
Another drug in the penicillin class carries a broad indication for illnesses caused by the anthrax organism (*Bacillus anthracis*). Because the most up-to-date information about appropriate dosing following exposure to anthrax is available for Cipro (ciprofloxacin), doxycycline, and penicillin G procaine, use of these three drugs has been recommended. Antibiotic therapy should only be started in the case of suspected or confirmed exposure to anthrax. Antibiotics reduce the risk of severe disease following exposure, but do not prevent exposure.

**What are some possible side effects of penicillin G procaine?** (This list is NOT a complete list of side effects reported with penicillin. Your health care provider can discuss with you a more complete list of side effects.)

Some possible uncommon but serious side effects of penicillin G procaine include:
- A life-threatening allergic reaction (symptoms are difficulty breathing; closing of the throat; swelling of the lips, tongue, or face; hives)
- A rare condition that has a number of symptoms, including severe agitation; anxiety; confusion; fear of impending death; feeling, hearing, or seeing things that are not real – many believe that this reaction is caused by the procaine ingredient of this product
- Serious nerve damage or damage to the parts of the body that the affected blood vessels supply caused by accidental injection into arteries or veins very close to nerves – this side effect is more likely to happen in infants and children because they have less muscle mass protecting the nerves
- Severe inflammation (swelling) of the colon
- Unusual bleeding or bruising problems

Other more common, but less serious, side effects include:
- Diarrhea
- Pain at the injection site(s)

**What else should I know about penicillin G procaine?**
In deciding to use a medicine, the risks of taking the medicine must be weighed against the good it will do. If a person is exposed to anthrax, the risk of adverse events caused by penicillin treatment may be acceptable because of the seriousness of the disease. However, if a person is not exposed to anthrax, these risks may outweigh the benefits.

Some other things to consider:
- Using penicillin for more than 2 weeks may be associated with an increased risk of low white blood cell count and serum sickness. Serum sickness is a reaction similar to an allergy. However, unlike other allergies that occur very soon after receiving the medicine, serum sickness can develop 2 to 4 weeks later.
- There have been no formal clinical studies of the safety and effectiveness of penicillin in pregnant women. However, penicillins have been widely used in pregnant women and have not been shown to cause birth defects or other problems in animal studies.
- Before taking penicillin review with your health care provider ALL medications you are taking, including those that you take without a prescription.

**Sources:**
Food and Drug Administration, Center for Drug Evaluation & Research, [www.fda.gov/cder/drugprepare](http://www.fda.gov/cder/drugprepare)

For more information about penicillin G procaine, please contact the Division of Drug Information at druginfo@cdrf.gov or 1-888-INFOFDA (463-6332).

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