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On Drugs and Therapeutics

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IN BRIEF

Extended-Release Amoxicillin for Strep Throat

The FDA has approved an extended-release formulation of amoxicillin (*Moxatag* – MiddleBrook) for once-daily treatment of pharyngitis or tonsillitis caused by *Streptococcus pyogenes* in adults and children ≥ 12 years old. Approval was based on an unpublished study that found once-daily treatment with *Moxatag* 775 mg for 10 days non-inferior to penicillin V 250 mg four times a day for 10 days in eradication of *S. pyogenes*.

For decades, the drug of choice for oral treatment of streptococcal pharyngitis in adolescents and adults has been penicillin V 250 mg taken three or four times a day.¹ Amoxicillin is equally effective, but penicillin is generally recommended because of its narrower spectrum. In adults, immediate-release amoxicillin is usually dosed 375-500 mg two to three times a day, but giving it in a higher dose (750-1000 mg) once a day appears to be equally effective for treatment of strep throat.²⁻⁴

Each *Moxatag* tablet contains 775 mg of amoxicillin divided into one immediate-release and two delayed-release components. Compared to a similar dose of immediate-release amoxicillin suspension, absorption of amoxicillin from the new formulation is slower, resulting in a lower peak serum concentration, but the elimination half-life and amoxicillin exposure (AUC) are similar. *S. pyogenes* is susceptible to these serum concentrations, but they may be too low to treat other types of infections.

A 10-day supply of *Moxatag* is expected to cost about \$100 compared to \$4 for a similar course of penicillin V or immediate-release amoxicillin.⁵ There is no good reason to prescribe *Moxatag*.

1. A Bisno et al. Practice guidelines for the diagnosis and management of group A streptococcal pharyngitis. *Infectious Disease Society of America. Clin Infect Dis* 2002; 35:113.
2. P Shvartzman et al. Treatment of streptococcal pharyngitis with amoxycillin once a day. *BMJ* 1993; 306:1170.
3. HM Feder Jr. et al. Once-daily therapy for streptococcal pharyngitis with amoxicillin. *Pediatrics* 1999; 103:47.
4. HW Clegg et al. Treatment of streptococcal pharyngitis with once-daily compared with twice-daily amoxicillin: a noninferiority trial. *Pediatr Infect Dis J* 2006; 25:761.
5. Retail cost at one Walgreens pharmacy. February 27, 2009.

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