



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD

Commissioner

January 24, 2023

Dear Colleague:

This is an update on influenza activity and the availability and distribution of seasonal flu vaccine. Influenza activity in the U.S. continues to occur but is declining in most areas, as it is in New York City (NYC). Although indicators of influenza activity—including influenza positive lab results, syndromic surveillance of influenza-like illness (ILI) emergency department visits, and the number of ILI admissions—are all low or trending downward, they still indicate increased activity. In addition, there might be at least one more peak of activity this season. Five percent of respiratory specimens submitted for influenza testing to a sample of NYC laboratory facilities during the week ending January 14, 2023, were positive for influenza, and there were four influenza outbreaks reported from long-term care facilities that week. Nationally, there have been 85 pediatric deaths due to influenza this season, including five in NYC. It is not too late to vaccinate. Flu vaccination should continue to be a high priority at your facility and should continue to be so well into the spring.

The majority of influenza viruses tested in the U.S. thus far are in the same genetic subclade as, and antigenically similar to, the influenza viruses included in this season's flu vaccine. All viruses collected and evaluated nationally have been susceptible to the influenza antivirals oseltamivir, peramivir, zanamivir, and baloxavir.

As we have mentioned previously, flu vaccination coverage has been decreasing since 2020, though continues to improve each week. The greatest decline in coverage between last season and this season continues to be among the 5-8 year-olds; 6% fewer 5-8 year-olds received the vaccine compared to this time last season. Use every visit as an opportunity to vaccinate your eligible patients against influenza.

Approximately 173.5 million to 183.5 million flu vaccine doses will be produced nationally and, as of January 7, 2023, 171.2 million doses have already been distributed. In NYC, we have received almost all of the flu vaccine we pre-booked for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program and, as of January 20, 2023, 71% of those doses have been shipped to providers. Of the flu doses requested by providers nearly all have been distributed. You can increase your flu vaccine order and obtain additional doses in the Online Registry, where you placed your initial order. Call (347) 396-2489 for any assistance you need with your VFC flu vaccine order.

As of January 20, 2023, 93% of VFC providers have ordered flu vaccine. All VFC providers are expected to offer flu vaccine to their patients. VFC providers who have not yet ordered flu vaccine should do so immediately. If you need help with your VFC flu order, please call (347) 396-2489. Please do not allow your facility to run out of vaccine; if you need vaccine, contact us before your inventory gets too low.

Flu vaccine is still available for purchase for providers and medical facilities who need vaccine for their non-VFC eligible and/or adult populations. More information about what products are available can be found at <https://www.izsummitpartners.org/ivats/>.

For questions on flu vaccine, other than those pertaining to your VFC order, please call (347) 396-2400 or email nyccimmunize@health.nyc.gov. We thank you for your continuing efforts at protecting NYC residents from influenza.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jane R. Zucker'.

Jane R. Zucker, MD, MSc
Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Immunization