



December 19, 2023

Dear Colleague:

This is an update on influenza activity, the availability and distribution of seasonal flu vaccine, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) activity, and information on RSV immunization products.

Influenza activity and flu vaccines

Influenza activity continues to increase in most parts of the country, as it is in New York City (NYC). For the week ending December 9, 2023, 5,214 specimens taken from NYC residents and reported to the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) were positive for influenza, which is a 51% increase from the previous week (which was a 67% increase from the week prior to that one). Influenza-like illness visits were 8% of all weekly visits. During that same week ending December 9, 2023, there were 11 influenza outbreaks reported from long-term care facilities in NYC. There were no influenza-associated pediatric deaths reported, but during the previous week, the first influenza-associated pediatric death of the season among NYC residents was reported. Flu vaccine administration should still be a high priority at your facility. If you have not yet ordered flu vaccine, you should do so immediately. As of December 9, 2023, vaccine manufacturers have distributed almost 154 million doses of the 156.2 million to 170 million doses of flu vaccine that they expect to distribute nationally for use during the 2023-2024 season.

In NYC we have been allocated all the flu vaccine that we pre-booked for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, and 63% of this vaccine has been shipped to facilities. Facilities will receive partial shipments until their orders have been completely shipped. All products are in good supply.

As of December 8, 2023, 94% of VFC providers have ordered flu vaccine. 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.

Of concern, 5.6% fewer NYC children have received flu vaccine this season compared to the same time last season. There has been a 19.4% decrease in the number of NYC adults 19 years and older that have received at least one flu vaccine dose (that was reported to the Citywide Immunization Registry [CIR]), compared to the same period in the 2022-2023 season. Take every opportunity to identify patients who still need their flu vaccine, using [Citywide Immunization Registry \(CIR\) tools](#), and bring them into your office as soon as possible for vaccination. Use all evidence-based strategies to increase flu vaccine uptake in your facility; for example, have the option for vaccination-only visits, evening and weekend hours, and vaccination clinics. Strategies for increasing immunization coverage can be found on the [American Academy of Pediatrics website](#).

Influenza viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 are both circulating. We would like to remind you that COVID-19 vaccine, including the 2023-2024 formulation, and the flu vaccine can be administered at the same visit for those eligible to receive both vaccines.

We would also like to remind you that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continues to preferentially recommend the use of higher-dose, adjuvanted, or recombinant flu vaccines over standard-dose unadjuvanted flu vaccines for people 65 years and older. The preference applies to Fluzone High-Dose (HD-IIV4 [Sanofi]), Fluad® (aIIV4 [Seqirus]), and Flublok® (RIV4 [Sanofi]) flu vaccines. In addition, it is no longer recommended that persons who have had an allergic reaction to egg involving symptoms other than urticaria should be vaccinated in an inpatient or outpatient medical setting supervised by a health care provider who is able to recognize and manage severe allergic reactions; egg allergy alone, regardless of


severity, necessitates no additional safety measures or specific vaccination products. All vaccines should be administered in settings in which personnel and equipment needed for rapid recognition and treatment of acute hypersensitivity reactions are available.

RSV activity and RSV immunization products

RSV activity remains elevated in NYC. Information on immunization products that prevent RSV infection is available [here](#). Updates to this letter include the fact that vaccine for pregnant people, RSVPreF (Abrysvo™) can now be administered by pharmacists in New York State. **In addition, supply of the monoclonal antibody, nirsevimab (Beyfortus™), is very limited, but if you are a VFC provider, you can order VFC doses by emailing nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov. Be sure to include your VFC pin number and the quantity of 50 mg and 100 mg doses you would like.** We are allocating nirsevimab due to the shortage, and are actively working to create a fair distribution system of product across NYC's many health care facilities.

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

Sincerely,



Bindy Crouch, MD, MPH
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