



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**

Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
Commissioner

February 8, 2017

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

42-09 28th Street, CN21
Queens, NY 11101-4132

Dear Colleague:

This is an update from the New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Bureau of Immunization on influenza activity and flu vaccine availability.

Influenza activity in NYC is elevated. There have been four pediatric influenza-associated deaths in NYC, all in January. In addition, there have been many outbreaks in long-term care facilities; there were 44 outbreaks in January alone. So far this season, the predominant influenza strain has been H3N2, which has been associated with more severe influenza-related illness in the past.

Influenza activity has not yet peaked; in past seasons, outbreaks have occurred as late as May. Therefore, there is still time to vaccinate your patients, including administering the second dose to your patients <9 years of age. Characterization of circulating influenza virus strains indicates that to date there is a good match with the strains used in the vaccine, suggesting that vaccination should offer good protection. Childhood influenza immunization rates in NYC are lower this season than they were last year at this time, so we urge you to vaccinate all of your eligible patients. Use tools available through the Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR) to track your flu coverage, identify patients needing flu vaccine and to notify them/their parents to come into the office.

There is a good supply of vaccine in both the Vaccines for Children (VFC) and private sectors. For providers who need an additional supply of flu vaccine, the VFC program has vaccine available for order. To place your order, go to the Online Registry, at www.nyc.gov/health/cir. You may call 347-396-2489 or contact nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov for assistance. Providers needing to purchase vaccine for privately-insured patients can find information about product availability and ordering through the Influenza Vaccine Availability Tracking System (IVATS), at <http://www.izsummitpartners.org/ivats/>.

While flu vaccine is the best way to prevent influenza, influenza antiviral drugs are a second line of defense that can be used to treat influenza illness, especially for people who are severely ill or those who are at high risk of serious complications and who develop flu symptoms. A summary of antiviral recommendations for clinicians is available on the CDC website, at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/index.htm>.

For questions on the flu vaccine or any other vaccine-related issue, please contact (347) 396-2400 or email nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov. Additional information on influenza can be found at www.nyc.gov/flu. Thank you for helping to protect New Yorkers against influenza.

Sincerely,

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

Jane R. Zucker, MD, MSc