



New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

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Dear Health Care Professional:

Every year influenza-related illness, including pneumonia, causes 36,000 deaths nationwide. Here in New York City, influenza causes an estimated 1,100 deaths per year, and respiratory infections as a whole cause more than 2,000.

New Yorkers could face two types of influenza this fall and winter, if seasonal influenza viruses return accompanied by the novel H1N1 virus that affected the city last spring. The New York City Health Department urges health care practices to ensure that at-risk patients – and all staff – receive both the seasonal vaccine *and* the novel H1N1 vaccine this fall.

Health care providers play a vital role in encouraging their patients and staff to get vaccinated. To ensure that all staff and at-risk patients are protected, we urge you to:

- Strongly recommend the appropriate flu vaccine(s) for all at-risk patients.
- Screen all patients to determine if they also need a pneumococcal vaccine.
- Be sure that you and your staff get vaccinated against both seasonal influenza and novel H1N1 influenza as early as possible this fall.
- Continue to vaccinate high-risk patients throughout the flu season. Seasonal influenza was detected as late as June in New York City. Novel H1N1 influenza emerged in late April and has continued to circulate at low levels through the summer.

Vaccine to protect against seasonal influenza is now available in New York City, and a novel H1N1 vaccine is expected to arrive this fall. This kit explains how to obtain it for your patients. Vaccination is especially important for people at risk of severe illness and complications from influenza – and the two vaccines have different recommended priority groups. Here is a summary:

Priority Groups for Seasonal Influenza Vaccine	Priority Groups for Novel H1N1 Influenza Vaccine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant women • All health care workers • Anyone 6 months through 18 years of age • Anyone 19 through 49 years of age who has an underlying health condition that increases risk* • Adults 50 and older • Anyone concerned about being ill with influenza and transmitting it to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant women • All health care workers • Anyone 6 months through 24 years of age • Anyone 25 through 64 years of age who has an underlying health condition that increases risk* • People who live with or care for infants under 6 months of age

*Health conditions that increase risk of influenza complications include:

- Pregnancy.
- Age ≥ 65 years.
- Age < 2 years.
- Chronic pulmonary disease such as asthma and COPD.
- Chronic cardiovascular, renal, and hepatic disease, except hypertension.
- Hematologic disease, such as sickle cell anemia.
- Metabolic disorders, such as diabetes.
- Immunosuppression, including HIV-related or caused by medication or malignancy.
- Neuromuscular disorders, spinal cord injury, seizure disorders, or cognitive dysfunction that may compromise the handling of respiratory secretions or that increase the risk of aspiration.
- Long-term aspirin therapy for diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis or Kawasaki disease (patients < 19 years of age) because of the risk for Reye syndrome.

In addition to the above vaccinations, pneumococcal vaccine should be given to people 65 years of age and older, and to anyone with long-term health problems.

By reviewing this Influenza and Pneumococcal Vaccination Action Kit, you will gain information and tools that can help you better serve your patients. We hope you find this information useful. To obtain more clinical tools, resources and patient education materials, please contact your Health Department representative, call 311, or visit www.nyc.gov/flu.

Thank you for your dedication and your contribution to the health of New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Farley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Commissioner
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