



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
Commissioner

August 3, 2015

Dear Colleague:

The New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) Bureau of Immunization (BOI) would like to inform you that the initial distribution of seasonal flu vaccine for the 2015-16 season has begun. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) continues to recommend that all people aged 6 months and older receive an annual flu vaccine. Please be sure to vaccinate all of your patients and staff, especially those at high risk for severe disease and complications from influenza, including children less than 5 years of age, people with long-term health conditions, pregnant females, and people age 50 and older. Begin vaccinating as soon as you receive vaccine; it is not too early to start vaccinating your patients now.

Influenza Updates for the 2015-2016 season

There are two new strains in this year's flu vaccine. An A/Switzerland/9715293/2013 (H3N2)-like virus replaces the A/Texas/50/2012 (H3N2)-like strain that was in last year's vaccine; a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus replaces the B/Massachusetts/2/2012-like strain, which are both from the Yamagata lineage. During the 2014-15 flu season, most influenza A (H3N2) viruses that were isolated were antigenically similar to the A/Switzerland/9715293/2013 strain.

Flublok® (Protein Sciences), the formulation produced using recombinant technology and indicated for those with a severe egg allergy, is now licensed for persons aged 18 years of age and older.

At its February meeting, ACIP voted to revise its prior year's recommendation for preferentially using live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) in healthy children 2 through 8 years of age. No preference is expressed for LAIV or inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV) for any person aged 2 through 49 years of age for whom either vaccine is appropriate.

Vaccine Ordering through the Vaccines for Children Program

BOI is now accepting Vaccines for Children (VFC) flu vaccine orders; all VFC orders must be placed electronically, using the Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR), at www.nyc.gov/health/cir. After logging into the CIR, click on the VFC icon and select the Order Influenza Vaccine tab. Please submit an order for **all** of the flu vaccine you will need for the **entire 2015-16 season**. Please note that only quadrivalent vaccines will be available through the VFC program.

We have received our initial flu vaccine allocation (~3% of the total), and will begin to process orders and ship vaccine. We have not received any multi-dose vials, 0.25 ml pre-filled syringes or LAIV. Be aware that shipments of LAIV are expected to be delayed until sometime in September. We will ship partial orders to allow your facility to begin immunizing your patients who are being seen now. Depending on how much total vaccine you order, you may receive multiple small shipments. We will send more vaccine automatically until your entire order is filled. Note that we are now providing you with VFC-eligible population estimates to help you order appropriate quantities of vaccine.

You will be able to track your flu vaccine shipments and edit your flu vaccine order in the Online Registry. If you need assistance with submitting your order or have questions, please e-mail nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov or call the VFC program at 347-396-2489. We expect to be able to supply you with enough flu vaccine to immunize all of your patients. Vaccination should not end if your practice runs out of vaccine; you can order additional vaccine through the VFC program, if needed. Flu vaccine is not included in your facility's doses administered report, and unused vaccine will not affect your future vaccine orders.

Vaccine Ordering For Non-VFC Eligible Children and Adults

For non-VFC eligible children and adults, providers can obtain flu vaccine by contacting vaccine manufacturers or distributors. For a list of vaccine manufacturers and distributors, visit: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/flu-vac-ordering.pdf>, which will soon be updated to reflect vaccines available this coming season. Although flu vaccine can be purchased, you will need to confirm directly with the vaccine manufacturer or distributor which vaccine products they have. Please note that New York State Public Health Law §2112, effective July 1, 2008, prohibits the administration of vaccines containing more than trace amounts of thimerosal to children younger than 3 years of age and to women who know they are pregnant (pregnancy testing is not required prior to vaccination). Be sure to order enough of the preservative-free, single-dose preparations of vaccine to immunize all of these patients in your practice. If you are unable to obtain preservative-free vaccine, you may administer any available formulation with informed consent and you must document your attempts to find preservative-free vaccine.

Vaccinating Children 6 Months through 8 Years of Age

Children aged 6 months through 8 years of age who have not received two doses of flu vaccine prior to this season, should receive a second dose of flu vaccine, administered at least 4 weeks after the first dose. Thus, if a child under 9 years of age has previously received two doses of flu vaccine, that child will need only one dose this season.

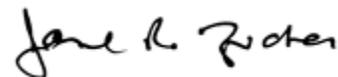
Be sure to immunize all children 6 through 59 months of age attending a NYC DOHMH-licensed childcare facility, including daycare, nursery school, Head Start and pre-K in New York City, as they are required to receive at least one dose of flu vaccine between now and December 31st.

Reporting of Flu Vaccines Administered

Providers must report all doses administered to children less than 19 years of age to the CIR. Remember to report doses given in weekend and special influenza clinics. To help with compliance with the new influenza daycare mandate, it is even more important that these vaccines be reported to the CIR. As of July 12, 2013, vaccines administered to adults age 19 years and older may be reported to the CIR with only *verbal* consent. Written consent is no longer required. We strongly encourage providers to obtain verbal consent from adult patients, document it in the patient's record, and report all administered doses. We recommend that you include obtaining consent to report immunizations as part of the general consent process in your facility. If you are not already registered with the CIR, we encourage you to do so. For more information, please visit www.nyc.gov/health/cir. Effective October 2014, pharmacists and registered nurses in NYC must report all vaccines, including flu vaccine given to adults to the CIR, with the patient's verbal consent. By obtaining access to CIR, you will be able to look up your adult patients to see if they have gotten a flu vaccine outside of your practice. Flu vaccines given outside your practice that are documented in the patient's medical record are valid and count toward quality improvement initiatives and incentives.

We encourage you to begin vaccinating as soon as possible. For current information about influenza, please visit: www.nyc.gov/flu. We will send out updates throughout the season to keep you informed. Thank you for helping protect New York City residents from influenza.

Sincerely,



Jane R. Zucker, M.D., M.Sc.
Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Immunization