



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

January 9, 2018

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 on the availability and distribution of seasonal influenza vaccine, as well as a report on influenza activity. Nationally, influenza activity is increasing sharply, and the percentage of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness—defined as fever (temperature of 100° F [37.8° C] or greater) and cough and/or sore throat—is above baseline. A total of 13 influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been reported in the United States (US). New York State (NYS) is experiencing widespread influenza activity, and, per the NYS Sanitary Code (NYCRR § 2.59), all health care and residential facilities and agencies regulated pursuant to Articles 28, 36, or 40 of the Public Health Law who are not vaccinated against influenza must wear a mask when they are in areas where patients or residents may be present. In New York City (NYC), influenza activity is increasing, with continuing outbreaks at long-term care facilities. Clinical laboratories in NYC continue to report specimens positive for influenza type A and type B.

The majority of the influenza viruses collected from the US during October 1 through December 30, 2017 were characterized antigenically and genetically as being similar to the cell-grown reference viruses representing the 2017–18 Northern Hemisphere influenza vaccine viruses. However, preliminary results for influenza vaccine effectiveness (VE) in the US have not been released for the current season. Still, according to the CDC, data suggest that the influenza vaccine continues to offer protection against all influenza viruses, and can reduce the severity of illness for those who do get the flu. Additional information about VE, including information addressing news reports of reduced VE in Australia, can be found by scrolling down to “Flu Vaccine Effectiveness” towards the bottom of the webpage <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season-2017-2018.htm>.

All influenza vaccine products are in good supply. For any help you might need with your Vaccines for Children (VFC) influenza vaccine order, please call (347) 396-2489. For non-VFC eligible children and adults, providers can still obtain influenza vaccine by contacting vaccine manufacturers or distributors. For a list of vaccine manufacturers and distributors, visit <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/flu-vac-ordering>.

Be advised that doses of influenza vaccine received from the VFC program are not automatically added to your site’s inventory. In order to track your influenza vaccine usage, be sure to use the Online Registry’s **Find and Add Lot** function in the Vaccine Inventory Management (VIM) section to add VFC influenza vaccine doses received to your dashboard.

For questions on the influenza vaccine, other than those pertaining to your VFC order, please contact (347) 396-2400 or email nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov. Thank you for your continued efforts in protecting NYC residents from influenza.

Sincerely,

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

Jane R. Zucker, MD, MSc