



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

December 11, 2014

Dear Colleague:

The New York City (NYC) Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Bureau of Immunization would like to provide an update on influenza activity and vaccine availability. We also want to make you aware of new provider and patient education materials on flu vaccination.

Currently, influenza activity is minimal but increasing in NYC. Early data suggest this influenza season could be severe. Over 90% of influenza viruses collected in the United States have been identified as an H3N2 strain, and about half are antigenically different from the H3N2 strain in the vaccine. Influenza seasons with predominant H3N2 strains have been associated with higher rates of hospitalization and mortality. It is important that you vaccinate all your patients with flu vaccine as it can offer protection against circulating strains and may offer cross-protection against the antigenically different H3N2 strain. Additionally, providers should be prepared to use the antiviral medications oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®) for treatment and prophylaxis of influenza as an adjunct to vaccination, especially among groups at higher risk of complications from influenza. More information on antiviral treatment can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/summary-clinicians.htm>. NYC influenza surveillance data are available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/flu/html/data/data.shtml>. Providers can also direct questions to the Provider Access Line at 866-692-6341.

The Vaccines for Children (VFC) program has all formulations of flu vaccine still available for order. Providers wishing to purchase additional vaccine for privately insured patients can obtain information from all major distributors through the Influenza Vaccine Availability Tracking System (IVATS) at www.izsummitpartners.org/ivats/. For providers using FluMist®, MedImmune has a FluMist® Replacement Program, which allows for replacement, at no cost, of unused or expiring FluMist doses for the 2014-15 season. For more information, see the attached letter.

We would like to make you aware of two resources on influenza and flu vaccination. First is the annual City Health Information (CHI) publication "[Influenza Prevention and Control, 2014-15](#)." The CHI summarizes flu and pneumococcal vaccine recommendations for all age and risk groups, and has information on vaccine administration technique, vaccine safety, influenza treatment and control, and influenza disease reporting, as well as a list of additional resources. Second is the 2014-15 Health Bulletin "Influenza Germs are Everywhere - The Vaccine is Your Best Protection" brochure which can be made available to your patients to explain the importance of flu vaccination. Free print versions are available for order in English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Haitian Creole by calling 311. Downloadable versions are also available in Arabic, French, Korean, Bengali, Urdu and Yiddish at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/living/immun.shtml>.

We thank you for helping to protect New Yorkers against influenza. General information on influenza can be found at www.nyc.gov/flu.

Sincerely,

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

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