



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

Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

August 15, 2019

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 2019-2020 season has begun. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) continues to recommend that all people 6 months of age 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 patients, and people aged 65 and older. Begin vaccinating as soon as you receive vaccine; it is not too early to start vaccinating your patients.

Influenza Updates for the 2019-2020 Season

This year's flu vaccine contains the following virus strains, two of which are new: an A/Brisbane/02/2018 (H1N1)pdm-09-like virus, an A/Kansas/14/2017 (H3N2)-like virus, and a B/Colorado/06/2017-like (Victoria lineage) virus. Quadrivalent vaccines will contain the same viruses plus an additional influenza B virus, B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (Yamagata lineage) virus. The A virus components were updated from last year to better match circulating viruses. The H3N2 virus component selection was delayed to allow more time for monitoring H3N2 virus circulation and characterization of potential candidate vaccine viruses. Because of this, there might be delays in availability of some flu vaccine products since manufacturers operate under a tight timeline for producing, testing, releasing and distributing flu vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners will continue to coordinate and collaborate with U.S. flu vaccine manufacturers to monitor production and vaccine availability timeliness.

For the 2019-20 influenza season, ACIP voted to recommend use of live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) (FluMist Quadrivalent®, AstraZeneca) as one of the available licensed influenza vaccine products. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) did not cite a preference this season for the injected vaccine over the nasal spray, as it did last season. It supports use of any age-appropriate, licensed influenza vaccine, in harmony with guidance from CDC.

As was the case during the last season, all children 6 months through 59 months of age enrolled in New York City Article 47 & 43 regulated childcare, Head Start, nursery, and pre-kindergarten programs must receive one dose of flu vaccine between July 1st and December 31st of each year. Although some children may need a second dose in order to comply with ACIP recommendations, that second dose will not be required for school attendance.

As we informed you in our [July 10, 2019, letter](#), legislation removing non-medical exemptions from school and child care immunization requirements was signed into New York State law, so all previously approved religious exemptions are now void. Consequently, you may be seeing more children 6 months through 59 months of age for a flu vaccine this influenza season.

Licensed pharmacists in New York State (NYS) can vaccinate children starting at 2 years of age, against influenza (but no other vaccines). The vaccine doses will be reported to the Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR) so you will be informed if a patient received a flu vaccine at a pharmacy.

Vaccine Ordering through the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program

BOI is now accepting VFC flu vaccine orders; all VFC orders must be placed electronically, using the CIR, at www.nyc.gov/health/cir. After logging into the CIR, click on the Vaccine Inventory Management (VIM) icon and select the Order Influenza tab. Please submit an order for **all** of the flu vaccine you will need for the **entire 2019-20 season**. Please note that only quadrivalent vaccines will be available through the VFC program.

This season, certain flu vaccine presentations formerly licensed only for persons ≥ 3 years of age are now licensed down to 6 months of age. Consequently, the following presentations can now be used in children starting at 6 months of age: 0.5 mL single-dose pre-filled syringes and 0.5 mL single-dose vials of Fluzone® (Sanofi Pasteur), 0.5 mL single-dose pre-filled syringes of Flulaval® (GSK), and 0.5 mL single-dose pre-filled syringes of Fluarix® (GSK). (Note that the VFC program will not be supplying the 0.25 mL single-dose formulations intended only for children 6-35 months of age.) You may receive any of those products, depending on availability, and they are to be considered equivalent when calculating how many doses a child under 9 years of age will need. As mentioned above, FluMist is one of the recommended flu vaccines, and can be used in children starting at 2 years of age, though supplies of this formulation from the VFC program will be extremely limited.

Because of the expansion of the age indications for Fluzone, Flulaval, and Fluarix, down to 6 months of age, there is no longer any need for you to specify three categories of flu vaccine when placing your VFC order; this year you will need to indicate only the amount of inactivated vaccine you need to vaccinate your 6 month-18 year-old population and the amount of FluMist.

A review of the amount of influenza vaccine ordered during previous seasons indicates that many sites are not ordering enough influenza vaccine to fully vaccinate their VFC-eligible populations. The VFC ordering tool is designed to help ensure that all of your VFC-eligible population is properly immunized against influenza. The recommended order quantity column is an estimate of the **minimum** number of vaccine doses your site needs for the 2019-2020 influenza season. Please use these recommendations as a guide when ordering your influenza vaccine. It is not required that you order the recommended amount—you can order more or less--and you can adjust your order in the Online Registry during the season, as needed. Influenza vaccine is not included in your practice's doses administered report (DAR) calculation, so you will not be penalized for any unused vaccine. We expect to be able to supply you with enough flu vaccine to immunize all of your VFC-eligible patients though, as in the past, you will receive partial shipments until your order is filled. The amount and timing of when vaccine will be shipped will depend on flu vaccine availability to the NYC VFC program. You will be able to track your flu vaccine shipments in the Online Registry.

BOI has received an initial, small allocation of flu vaccine from CDC. 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. Vaccination should not end if your practice runs out of vaccine; if needed, you can order additional vaccine.

Flu Vaccine Coverage

In NYC, pediatric flu vaccine coverage increased in the 2018-19 season compared to the previous season, but for children aged 5 through 18 years remains well below the Healthy People 2020 goal of 70%. In 2018-19, 74% of children aged 6 through 59 months received at least one dose of flu vaccine (data from the CIR); this rate is very good and likely due to the childcare flu vaccine mandate. However, only 55% of children aged 5 through 8 years, and 42% of children aged 9 through 18 years received at least one dose of flu vaccine in 2018-19. Similarly, only 47% of persons 18 years of age and older, and 63% of persons 65 years of age and older, received an influenza vaccine in 2018 (2018 Community Health Survey), compared to the Healthy People 2020 goal of 70%.

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://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/flu-vac-ordering>, which will soon be updated to reflect flu vaccines available this coming season. You will need to confirm product availability directly with vaccine manufacturers and distributors. Please note that NYS 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 patients who know they are pregnant (pregnancy testing is not required prior to vaccination). Be sure to order enough of the preservative-free, single dose presentations of flu vaccine to immunize all of these patients in your practice. In addition to the pediatric formulations listed above, there are two other non-VFC flu vaccine options for children 6-35 months of age: 0.25 mL single-dose pre-filled syringes of Afluria® (Sequiris) and 0.25 mL single-dose pre-filled syringes of Fluzone.

Vaccinating Children 6 Months through 8 Years of Age

In the 2019-20 season, the recommendation for flu vaccination of children 6 months through 8 years of age is unchanged: children in that age group who have not received two doses of flu vaccine prior to July 1, 2019, will require 2 doses of flu vaccine, administered at least 4 weeks apart. The two previous doses do not need to have been given during the same season or consecutive seasons. 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.

Reporting of Flu Vaccines Administered

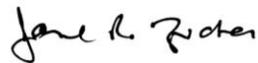
Providers must report all doses administered to children less than 19 years of age to the CIR. Remember to report doses given during weekend and special influenza clinics. Please note that vaccines administered to adults age 19 years and older may be reported to the CIR with either verbal or written consent. We strongly encourage providers to obtain consent from adult patients 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 consent. By obtaining access to the CIR, you will be able to look up your adult patients to see if they have gotten a flu vaccine outside of your practice, including at pharmacies. All chain pharmacies report administered vaccine doses to the CIR, as do many smaller pharmacies. 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.

Using the CIR for Childhood Flu Vaccination Quality Improvement

You can run your own childhood flu vaccination up-to-date report in the Online Registry so that you can track your coverage and identify patients who have not yet received their flu vaccine. Once you log onto the CIR, click on "Tools" in the top row, then [Standard or Flu Coverage Report](#). In the middle of the page, you will see "Influenza Coverage Report." Indicate which age groups you would like to run coverage for (you may choose all), then click "Continue" and your report(s) will run. The screen will direct you to where the report(s) are stored. When you find your report, click on "Done" in the last column of the row that contains your report. You will then be given the option to "Create Recall List," which will create lists, labels and letters for you. Alternatively, if you wish to text-message your patients due for flu (or any other) vaccine, click on "Recall" in the top row, then choose the combination "Recall," "Custom," "Text Message" and "One Time" or "Recurrent," then click on "Continue". You will be directed to the custom recall screen, and given directions on completing your text-messaging job. We encourage you to implement quality improvement activities and strive to increase coverage over last year.

Please 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. We thank you for helping to protect NYC residents from influenza.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane R. Zucker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "Z".

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