



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

Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH

Commissioner

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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 2018-2019 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 females, 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 2018-2019 Season

This year's flu vaccine contains the following virus strains, two of which are new: an A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1) pdm-09-like virus, an A/Singapore /INFIMH-16-0019/2016 A(H3N2)-like virus, and a B/Colorado/06/2017-like (B/Victoria lineage) virus. Quadrivalent vaccines will contain the same viruses plus an additional influenza B virus, B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (B/Yamagata lineage) virus. A decision to update the A(H3N2) component was made because the egg-propagated A/Singapore vaccine virus is antigenically more similar to circulating viruses than the egg-propagated A/Hong Kong A(H3N2) virus that was used in the 2017-18 vaccine. A change in the influenza B/Victoria lineage component was made due to increasing global circulation of an antigenically drifted B Victoria lineage virus.

For the 2018-19 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, but the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has advised against its use due to its inferior effectiveness against A(H1N1) during past seasons and the unknown effectiveness of the new A(H1N1) strain that is being used in the current LAIV formulation. For a further discussion by AAP on LAIV effectiveness and its current recommendations, see <http://www.aappublications.org/news/2018/06/07/influenza060718>. For the ACIP's updated recommendations on use of LAIV, see <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6722a5.htm>.

The New York Court of Appeals has upheld the NYC Health Code requirement for flu vaccine for daycare and childcare attending pre-kindergarten. All children 6 months through 59 months of age enrolled in New York City Article 47 & 43 regulated pre-kindergarten programs (Child Care, Head Start, Nursery or Pre-K) 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.

Licensed pharmacists in New York State are now permitted to 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 have access to this information.

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 **2018-19 season**. Please note that only quadrivalent vaccines will be available through the VFC program.

This season, there are three flu injectable vaccines for use in children 6-35 months of age: 0.25 mL single-dose pre-filled syringes 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). 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.

In NYC, pediatric flu vaccine coverage increased slightly in the 2017-18 season compared to the previous season, but remains well below the Healthy People 2020 goal of 70%. In 2017-18, only 64% of children aged 6 through 59 months, 53% of children aged 5 through 8 years, and 41% of children aged 9 through 18 years received at least one dose of influenza vaccine (data from the CIR). Similarly, only 44% of persons 18 years of age and older received an influenza vaccine in 2017 (2017 Community Health Survey), compared to the Healthy People 2020 goal of 70%.

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. We have amended the ordering tool to help ensure that the 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 2018-2019 influenza season. Please use these recommendations as a guide when ordering your influenza vaccine. It is not required that you order the recommended amount. Influenza vaccine is not included in your practice's doses administered report (DAR) calculation and you will not be penalized for any unused vaccine. You can adjust your order during the season as needed.

BOI has received an initial, small allocation of flu vaccine from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The amount and timing of vaccine shipped will depend on flu vaccine availability. You will be able to track your flu vaccine shipments and revise 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 VFC-eligible patients. Vaccination should not end if your practice runs out of vaccine; if needed, you can order additional vaccine.

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 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 presentations of flu vaccine to immunize all of these patients in your practice.

Vaccinating Children 6 Months through 8 Years of Age

In the 2018-19 season, children aged 6 months through 8 years of age who have not received two doses of flu vaccine prior to July 1, 2018, 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

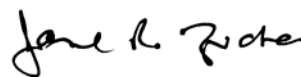
Providers must report all doses administered to children less than 19 years of age to the CIR. Remember to report doses given during weekend and special influenza clinics. Please note that vaccines administered to adults age 19 years and older may be reported to the CIR with either verbal or written 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. 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 Flu Vaccination Quality Improvement

You can run your own flu vaccine 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 (you may choose all) age groups you would like to run coverage for, 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 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,



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