



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

Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

March 14, 2019

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 influenza activity and the availability and distribution of seasonal flu vaccine. Influenza activity remains elevated in the United States, as well as in New York City (NYC). Specimens in NYC continue to test positive for influenza, and there continues to be influenza outbreaks in long-term care facilities. The majority of influenza viruses characterized antigenically and genetically in the United States are similar to the cell-grown reference viruses representing the 2018-19 Northern Hemisphere influenza vaccine viruses.

In NYC, we have received all of our Vaccines for Children (VFC) program flu vaccine, and all products are in good supply. For any help you may need with your VFC flu vaccine order, please call (347) 396-2489. **If you need additional VFC vaccine, don't stop vaccination efforts; revise your flu vaccine order so we can ship your facility more vaccine.**

Influenza activity in New York State (NYS) remains widespread, as it is in most of the United States. Influenza-like illness visits accounts for 2.9% of all outpatient weekly visits in NYC. There continues to be outbreaks in long-term care facilities, and two influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been confirmed in NYC; nationwide, as of March 2, 2019, 64 influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been confirmed. It is not possible to say definitively at this time how severe the 2018-19 season will be since there are still weeks of influenza activity to come, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has stated that severity indicators are lower than they were during a similar time-frame last season. This may change, as recently more H3N2 influenza A viruses have been detected, which have been associated with more severe disease.

Despite lower severity indicators, influenza is still taking a serious toll. Review and work to increase flu coverage for your facility; continue to vaccinate all eligible patients with flu vaccine. If you need additional Vaccines for Children (VFC) vaccine, order via the Online Registry, at www.nyc.gov/health/cir. For a list of available products for purchase, visit <http://www.izsubmitpartners.org/ivats/>.

Since influenza activity remains widespread in NYS, all personnel at healthcare and residential facilities regulated pursuant to Article 28, 36, or 40 of the Public Health Law who are not vaccinated against influenza are still required to wear a surgical or procedure mask while in areas where patients or residents may be present.

For questions on flu vaccine, other than those pertaining to your VFC order, please call (347) 396-2400 or email nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov. We thank you for your continuing efforts at protecting NYC residents from influenza.

Sincerely,

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

Jane R. Zucker, MD, MSc