



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc

Commissioner

December 6, 2021

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Dear Colleague:

This is an update on influenza activity and the availability and distribution of seasonal flu vaccine. Influenza activity remains low overall in the U.S., as it is in New York City (NYC), though a small percentage of respiratory specimens submitted for influenza testing has come back positive. It is not too late to vaccinate. Flu vaccination should continue to be a high priority at your facility and should continue to be so well into the spring of 2022.

Recent increases in influenza activity in many places in the U.S. could mark the beginning of the 2021-2022 influenza season in the U.S. While remaining low overall, an increase of influenza A(H3N2) viruses has been detected in recent weeks, with most of these infections occurring in young adults. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also is aware of influenza outbreaks in colleges and universities in several states.

Approximately 188-200 million flu vaccine doses will be produced nationally and, as of November 19, 2021, about 167 million doses have already been distributed. In NYC, as of November 26, 2021, we have received almost all of the flu vaccine we pre-booked for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, and 71% of those doses have been shipped to providers. Facilities will receive partial shipments until their orders have been completely shipped. Providers who requested to have their entire order shipped to them by October 31 have received their complete order already. Other facilities will continue to receive partial shipments of flu vaccine until their orders have been completely shipped. You can increase your flu vaccine order and obtain additional doses in the Online Registry, where you placed your initial order. Call (347) 396-2489 for any assistance you need with your VFC flu vaccine order.

As of November 19, 2021, only 82% of VFC providers have ordered flu vaccine and the amount of flu vaccine distributed to date is lower than this time last year. All VFC providers are expected to offer flu vaccine to their patients. VFC providers who have not yet ordered flu vaccine should do so immediately. If you need help with your VFC flu order, please call (347) 396-2489. Please do not allow your facility to run out of vaccine; if you need vaccine, contact us before your inventory gets too low.

Of concern, the number of pediatric flu vaccine doses administered is lagging behind by approximately 19% from this time last year. It is imperative that pediatric care providers make every effort to vaccinate their patients.

For your pediatric patients, you can identify those who still need to be vaccinated by creating lists in the Online Registry to identify those who still need flu vaccine; see <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/cir/flu-coverage-report.pdf>. For instructions to create influenza coverage reports and text-messaging recall, see <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/cir/cir-flu-coverage-and-custom-recall-texting-guide.pdf>

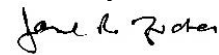
Flu vaccine is still available for purchase for providers and medical facilities who need vaccine for their non-VFC eligible and/or adult populations. More information about what products are available can be found at <https://www.izsummitpartners.org/ivats/>.

The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's City Health Information's annual edition on influenza prevention and control is available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/chi/chi-40-3.pdf>. In it, you will find information on the impact of influenza disease, strategies for improving flu vaccine coverage, influenza treatment and prophylaxis, availability of flu vaccine administration at pharmacies, and the requirement that children attending child care, school-based child care, Head Start, and prekindergarten programs be vaccinated. Additional information on influenza activity, flu vaccine recommendations, and educational materials are available at www.nyc.gov/flu.

Remember that COVID-19 vaccine and any other vaccines, including the flu vaccine, can be administered at the same visit. If your eligible patients have not received their recommended COVID-19 vaccine, they should get it as soon as possible.

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,



Jane R. Zucker, MD, MSc