



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Oxiris Barbot, MD
Commissioner

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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. Influenza-like illness visits accounted for 4% of all outpatient weekly visits in NYC for the week ending February 29, 2020. There have been three influenza-associated pediatric deaths in NYC; nationwide, as of February 29, 2020, 136 influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been confirmed.

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; update your flu vaccine order so we can ship more vaccine.**

Interim estimates of the 2019-20 seasonal influenza vaccine effectiveness (VE) have been released and are consistent with those from previous seasons when influenza vaccines were antigenically matched to circulating viruses. The overall estimated effectiveness of seasonal influenza vaccine for preventing medically attended, laboratory-confirmed influenza virus infection was 45%. VE was estimated to be 50% against influenza B/Victoria viruses, and 37% against influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, indicating that the vaccine has significantly reduced medical visits associated with influenza so far this season. Notably, vaccination provided substantial protection (VE=55%) among children and adolescents aged 6 months-17 years.

It is not possible to say definitively at this time how severe the 2019-20 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 markers of severe illness, including laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalization rates among children and adolescents aged <18 years and young adults aged 18-49 years, have been higher than at the corresponding time in recent seasons.

For questions on flu vaccine, other than those pertaining to your VFC order, please call (347) 396-2400 or email nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov. Influenza information resources are available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/providers/health-topics/influenza.page>. 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