



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**
Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
Commissioner

February 26, 2018

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 a request for a procedural change for your uninsured patients. You are about to receive a quarterly report from us with your flu vaccine rates. In New York City (NYC), as well as nationally, influenza activity remains widespread. Four influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been confirmed in NYC; nationwide, as of February 17, 2018, 97 influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been confirmed, with 13 occurring in the week ending February 17th alone.

In the interest of vaccinating as many children as possible, and as quickly as possible, we are requesting that you waive the administrative fee for uninsured patients receiving Vaccines for Children (VFC) vaccines who cannot afford this fee. We understand that this might be burdensome, but it is part of an effort to bring down barriers to vaccination. This is voluntary, and the request will not remain in place past this influenza season. As a reminder, the VFC provider agreement allows you to charge an administration fee for your uninsured patients but you are required to vaccinate them and not turn them away if they are unable to pay.

Overall interim vaccine effectiveness (VE) of the 2017-18 seasonal influenza for preventing laboratory-confirmed influenza associated with medically attended acute respiratory illness during the period November 2, 2017—February 3, 2018 was 36%. Although interim VE against the predominant A(H3N2) virus was 25%, among children aged 6 months through 8 years the VE estimate against A(H3N2) was 59%. Interim overall VE estimates were 67% and 42% against influenza A(H1N1) pdm09 and B viruses, respectively.

VE estimates against A(H3N2) viruses have been lower than estimates against A(H1N1) pdm09 and B viruses for several years. Vaccination still remains the best protection against illness caused by influenza and severe influenza outcomes, even if the vaccine fails to protect against infection. Flu vaccine is also associated with reduced pediatric deaths. Please continue to vaccinate all your eligible patients, and consider setting up vaccination-only clinics if the demand in your practice is high.

For questions about the influenza vaccine, please call (347) 396-2400 or email nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov. Thank you for your continued efforts in protecting NYC residents from influenza.

Sincerely,

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

Jane R. Zucker, MD, MSc