



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Ashwin Vasani, MD, PhD

Commissioner

February 28, 2023

Dear Colleague:

This is an update on influenza activity and the availability and distribution of seasonal flu vaccine. Seasonal influenza activity continues at low levels across most of the country, including New York City (NYC). Indicators of influenza activity—including influenza positive lab results, syndromic surveillance of influenza-like illness (ILI) emergency department visits, and the number of ILI admissions—are all low and have plateaued over the past few weeks. There remains the possibility of at least one more peak of activity this season. Two percent of respiratory specimens submitted for influenza testing to a sample of NYC laboratory facilities during the week ending February 18, 2023, were positive for influenza, and there were two influenza outbreaks reported from long-term care facilities that week. Nationally, there have been 115 pediatric deaths due to influenza this season, including five in NYC. 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.

The majority of influenza viruses tested in the U.S. thus far are still in the same genetic subclade as, and antigenically similar to, the influenza viruses included in this season's flu vaccine. All viruses collected and evaluated nationally have been susceptible to the influenza antivirals peramivir, zanamivir, and baloxavir; all influenza viruses except for one have been susceptible to oseltamivir.

Flu vaccination for children 6 months through 18 years of age remains lower than it was during the same time last season, and seems to have slowed in the past few weeks. As of February 18, 2023, 789,099 children aged 6 months to 18 years have received at least one flu vaccine during the 2022-2023 influenza season, compared to 802,695 children during the same period last season. The greatest decline in vaccination is still among the 5-8 year-old cohort (5.3% lower than this time last season). Use every visit as an opportunity to vaccinate your eligible patients against influenza.

Over 173 million flu vaccine doses have been distributed nationally as of February 11, 2023. In NYC, we have received almost all of the flu vaccine we pre-booked for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program and, as of February 17, 2023, 72% of those doses have been shipped to providers. All flu doses requested by providers have been distributed. 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. Please do not allow your facility to run out of vaccine; contact us before your inventory gets too low.

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/>.

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
Assistant Commissioner
Bureau of Immunization