



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Dave A. Chokshi, MD, MSc

Commissioner

January 9, 2022

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 is increasing nationally, with the eastern and central parts of the country seeing the majority of viruses reported. Influenza activity is now elevated in New York City (NYC). Respiratory specimens submitted for influenza testing in NYC have continued to be positive for either influenza A or influenza B.

Hospitalizations for influenza have started to increase nationally, and in NYC there has been an increase in influenza-like illness (ILI) emergency departments visits and in the number of ILI hospital admissions. There have also been several influenza outbreaks in long-term care facilities. There have been 2 influenza-associated pediatric deaths in the U.S.

Vaccination rates are still lagging behind what they were last season, with the number of flu doses administered to the NYC pediatric population as of January 1, 2022, 13% below what it was last year at this time. We recognize the challenges you face with the increase in the number of patients you see with COVID-19 and with those who need COVID-19 vaccination, as well as the possibility that you are conducting virtual visits and/or have reduced office hours to limit exposure at your facility. We encourage you to hold vaccination-only visits and to use Citywide Immunization Registry (CIR) tools to increase pediatric flu vaccine coverage. Go to <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/cir/flu-coverage-report.pdf> for instructions on how to create lists of your patients who still need flu vaccination and to create flu coverage reports. For further instructions on how to create flu coverage reports and for instructions on text-messaging recall, see <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/cir/cir-flu-coverage-and-custom-recall-texting-guide.pdf>

The majority of influenza viruses detected nationally thus far has been A(H3N2). While there are little data to date, most of the H3N2 viruses characterized so far are genetically closely related to the vaccine virus, though there are some antigenic differences that have developed as H3N2 viruses have continued to evolve.

Approximately 188-200 million flu vaccine doses will be produced nationally and, as of December 24, 2021, about 172.5 million doses have already been distributed. In NYC, as of December 17, 2021, we have received almost all of the flu vaccine we pre-booked for the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program, and 76% of those doses have been shipped to providers. 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. There are no issues with flu vaccine supply, and you may order as much as you can store and will need.

As of December 17, 2021, only 83% of VFC providers have ordered flu vaccine. 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.

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". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jane R. Zucker, MD, MSc