

For Health Professionals

Health Alerts

Health Advisory #103 - Interim Influenza Vaccination Recommendations - 2004-2005 Season - October 7, 2004

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) anticipates a significant reduction in the available supply of influenza vaccine for the 2004-2005 influenza season in the United States. Chiron Corporation will not distribute its Fluvirin® Influenza virus vaccine this season, due to the suspension of the company's manufacturing license by regulatory agencies in the United Kingdom. Nationwide, this reduces the anticipated available supply of inactivated vaccine by approximately 48%. The remaining supply of influenza vaccine expected to be available in the United States this season is nearly 54 million doses of Fluzone® (inactivated flu shot) manufactured by Aventis Pasteur, Inc. Of these doses, approximately 30 million doses already have been distributed by the manufacturer. In addition, approximately 1.1 million doses of live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV/FluMist ®) manufactured by MedImmune will be available this season.

Because of this urgent situation, the CDC, in coordination with its Advisory Committee for Immunization Practices (ACIP), is issuing interim recommendations for influenza vaccination during the 2004-2005 season. These interim recommendations were formally recommended by ACIP on October 5, 2004, and take precedence over earlier recommendations. The following priority groups for vaccination with inactivated influenza vaccine this season are considered to be of equal importance and are:

- All children aged 6-23 months;
- Adults aged 65 years and older;
- Persons aged 2-64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions;
- All women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- Residents of nursing homes and long term care facilities;
- Children aged 6 months to 18 years on chronic aspirin therapy;
- Health care workers providing direct patient care; and
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children aged < 6 months.

In the presence of a reduced supply of flu vaccines, persons who are not included in one of the above priority groups should be asked to forego or defer vaccination.

The NYSDOH had previously ordered sufficient supplies of influenza vaccine from Aventis Pasteur® to meet the needs of the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. To date, the NYSDOH has received approximately one-third of this order, and a smaller allotment of preservative-free product intended for younger children (aged 6-35 months). It is hoped that as additional supplies become available, they will be distributed to VFC participating providers. In the current environment, however, we must be ready to ensure that other priority groups have the opportunity to be vaccinated as well.

Intranasally administered, live, attenuated influenza vaccine (FluMist®), if available, should be encouraged for healthy persons who are aged 5-49 years and are not pregnant, including health-care workers (except those who care for severely immunocompromised patients in special care units) and persons caring for children aged <6 months. Preliminary information indicates that one WNY health insurance company-BCBSWNY-is covering the cost of FluMist® and others may follow.

Guidelines and policies, from the federal and state governments, are evolving. Our present planning includes:

- Education and emphasis on restricting influenza vaccination to patients in the priority groups
- Development of 2 registries, one for vaccine providers seeking vaccine, and the other for vaccine providers who have *excess* vaccine they wish to transfer to others who need it
- Dissemination of information about community-based clinics for priority patients that are taking place; details are available at: www.immunizewny.org
- Encouragement of surveillance for Influenza disease via participation in the U.S. Sentinel Physician Influenza Surveillance Network.
- Monitoring of changes in influenza vaccine availability and reimbursement (see FluMist® above)
- It is important to note that additional emphasis on non-vaccine and infection control strategies (i.e. proper handwashing and respiratory etiquette) to reduce the risk of contracting influenza will become as important as vaccination in order to prevent or reduce the number of flu outbreaks in the future.

For more information, updates and recommendations please visit the following websites:

http://www.erie.gov/health/pdfs/Interim_Flu.pdf

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

www.health.state.ny.us.

Patient education resources regarding influenza and non-vaccine strategies are available at the following websites:

www.health.state.ny.us

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/preventing>

Any questions regarding the availability of influenza vaccine, should be addressed to the Erie County Department of Health at (716) 858-2929 (Monday - Friday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM).

Providers with questions regarding VFC vaccine, however, should call the NYS VFC Program at 518-474-4578.