

For Health Professionals

Health Alerts

Health Alert Advisory #59 - Influenza Vaccine Alert - 12/29/2003

Please distribute immediately to appropriate departments including: Infection Control Department, Emergency Department, Employee Health Service, Infectious Disease Department, Director of Nursing, Medical Director, and all Patient Care areas

New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) has received notice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of potential distribution of unlicensed influenza vaccine in the United States. The FDA is working aggressively with the CDC and state health authorities to investigate the source and quality of influenza vaccine being made available through unusual suppliers. This alert is to advise local health departments, acute care and long-term care facilities, adult homes, and other medical providers of the activities currently under investigation. To date, we have not confirmed that any of these activities have occurred in New York State.

FDA has received reports of offers to sell unlicensed vaccine in the U.S., and of individuals who are not licensed health care professionals administering questionable influenza vaccine in apparent efforts to take advantage of reports that influenza vaccine is in short supply. FDA is actively investigating these reports and taking prompt action, when appropriate. For example, FDA and the Florida Department of Health worked together to prevent unlicensed product from entering the country and being offered for sale.

To help assure that the influenza vaccine received is safe and effective, it is recommended that vaccine be purchased from reliable sources. Local health departments, healthcare facilities, and medical providers are urged to exercise discretion in determining that the vaccine is licensed for sale in the U.S. and is being sold by a reputable distributor.

If you are contacted by any company that may be offering questionable influenza vaccine or vaccine at an inflated price, or are aware of questionable vaccination providers or practices please contact the Erie County Department of Health at (716) 858-7697 or the NYSDOH Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at (518) 473-4436.