



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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TO: Medical Practitioners
Article 28 Health Care Facilities
Local Health Departments
Nursing Homes

FROM: NYSDOH Bureau of Immunization

**HEALTH ADVISORY: 2009 H1N1 Influenza Vaccine May Now Be Given to All New Yorkers
Please distribute to staff in the all primary care units and pharmacy department.**

The purpose of this advisory is to inform you that New York State is suspending the requirement that the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine be restricted to the ACIP priority groups.

SUMMARY

- Effective immediately, the 2009 H1N1 influenza vaccine can now be administered to anyone who wishes to receive it.
- This is possible because of the efforts of health care providers and county health departments over the past two and a half months to vaccinate the priority groups, an increased and consistent supply of vaccine in recent weeks, and signs of decreased demand by priority groups
- Health care providers should still focus on the priority groups and members of priority groups are still encouraged to get vaccinated, but providers should not pass up an opportunity to vaccinate anyone who wishes to receive it if vaccine is available.
- All children 9 years of age and younger need, and should be encouraged to receive, a second dose of vaccine.
- H1N1 influenza activity is still widespread in New York State, although disease has been declining in recent weeks. This is a window of opportunity to provide H1N1 vaccine to provide protection in the event of another wave of disease in the winter.
- If health care providers have a pending vaccine order with the state health department, vaccine will be shipped as soon as it is available. Go to www.nyhealth.gov to check the status of your order.
- Call 1-800 KID SHOT on your assigned day to place an order if you need additional vaccine, or to cancel unwanted orders.
- Getting vaccinated now will protect against current circulating H1N1 disease as well as a third wave of disease if it occurs in the late winter and early spring.

MORE INFORMATION

Governor David A. Paterson announced today that, effective immediately, H1N1 flu vaccine will be made available to all New Yorkers who want the vaccine, including those who are outside the initial priority groups.

Since early October, when the H1N1 flu vaccine first became available, New York State has focused on providing access to the vaccine for New Yorkers in priority groups considered at highest risk of serious illness from the flu. As a result of these efforts and increased supplies of vaccines, it is now appropriate to expand access to the vaccine to help more New Yorkers get protection against the flu.

New York State continues to report widespread H1N1 flu activity for this time of year, although rates of disease, emergency department visits and hospitalizations for influenza have dropped significantly in the last several weeks statewide. However, the flu can be unpredictable, and it is very possible that there will be another wave of influenza activity moving into the winter months. Therefore, there is a window of opportunity in the coming weeks to vaccinate people to provide protection against a possible future wave of the H1N1 flu this winter and spring. With the supply of vaccine increasing, New Yorkers are being urged to take advantage of the opportunity to protect themselves and their families against the flu.

While the supplies of injectable vaccines are still increasing, supplies of the live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) or nasal spray vaccine are readily available. LAIV is a safe and effective vaccine option for persons aged 2-49 years who are otherwise healthy and not pregnant. It is a weakened live virus vaccine, which cannot cause influenza. Health care providers are encouraged to order LAIV for their eligible patients.

The H1N1 vaccine is as safe and effective as the ordinary seasonal flu vaccine and is developed using the same process as seasonal vaccine. Flu vaccines have consistently had excellent safety records in recent decades, as documented in multi-year studies. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a report December 4 on the safety of the H1N1 vaccines that found no substantial differences between the safety of the H1N1 vaccines and that of seasonal flu vaccines (see: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5848a4.htm>). Public health officials continue to emphasize that getting the vaccine is much safer than getting the flu.

All medical providers that would like to order vaccine must be registered. To register please go to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) website and follow the H1N1 links to the registration page. If you are already registered, please call the NYSDOH Vaccine Call Center at 1-800-KID-SHOT (or 1-800-543-7468) to place an order on your assigned day.

For additional information on H1N1 vaccine or H1N1 disease, you can also call the NYSDOH hotline at 1-800-808-1987.