

January, 2014

Dear Colleague:

The New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) is encouraging health care facilities to pre-book their private stock influenza vaccine now from their vaccine distributors in order to ensure that a sufficient amount of vaccine will be available to protect their employees and vulnerable patients for the 2014 – 2015 influenza season. Annual influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons aged six months and older. Five formulations (the traditional “flu shot”, the high-dose flu shot for patients and employees aged 65 years and older, the “egg free” formulation for those with severe egg allergies, the intradermal flu shot, and the nasal spray) will be available.

Timeliness in placing your order for influenza vaccine is a critical component of your purchasing plan. Influenza vaccines take months to produce and vaccine manufacturers are hesitant to take on the risk of producing products they will be unable to sell. As a result, pre-booking private stock influenza vaccine orders for the coming influenza season generally takes place in January or February, even though most health systems are still administering influenza vaccine for the current season. Information on Vaccines for Children (VFC) influenza vaccine pre-booking will be sent under separate cover.

It is important that your institution develop an influenza vaccine purchasing plan that allows you to meet the needs of your patients and employees. This season has seen increased numbers of health care personnel vaccinated due to the flu mask regulation and we urge you to consider this when planning for 2014 – 15. Influenza seasons are also unpredictable and can begin earlier or last longer than expected. In order to protect your patients and employees you should review your influenza vaccine purchasing options now and assess the needs of your organization.

For more information on distributors and influenza vaccine availability, please visit the following websites:

- Influenza Vaccine Distributor Information: <http://tinyurl.com/com2t7t>
- Influenza Vaccine Availability Tracking System: [http://www.preventinfluenza.org/ivats/ivats\\_12\\_13.pdf](http://www.preventinfluenza.org/ivats/ivats_12_13.pdf)

For more information on the flu mask regulation, please visit <https://www.health.ny.gov/flumaskreg>.

We strongly encourage you to plan for the next influenza season and pre-book influenza vaccine now. Should you need further assistance, please call the NYS DOH Bureau of Immunization at 518-473-4437.

Sincerely,

Lynn C. Berger, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director, Bureau of Immunization