

August 1, 2012

Dear Chief Executive Officer:

The purpose of this letter is to remind you of the requirements for offering influenza vaccination to parents and anticipated caregivers of neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) patients and to each admitted person age sixty-five years or older.

For the upcoming season (2012 – 2013), influenza vaccine will be composed of three different strains: 1) A/California/7/2009 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus, 2) A/Victoria/361/2011 (H3N2)-like virus, and 3) B/Wisconsin/1/2012-like virus. An individual nine years of age and older will need only one dose of vaccine to be protected against influenza. For children six months to eight years of age, the dosing algorithm for the 2012 – 2013 season is as follows:

- Children who have never received flu vaccine, or for whom vaccination history is unknown, should receive two doses of vaccine separated by at least four weeks.
- Among children who have received the seasonal flu vaccine previously, those who did not receive a total of at least two doses of seasonal vaccine since July 2010, or for whom the exact history since July 2010 is unknown, should receive two doses of this year's vaccine separated by at least four weeks.
- Among children who have received the seasonal flu vaccine previously, those who have received a total of at least two doses of seasonal vaccine since July 2010 need only one dose of this year's vaccine.

Requirement in NICUs. New York State Public Health Law (PHL) section 2805-h requires all general hospitals with NICUs to offer influenza vaccination annually, between September 1 and April 1, to all persons who are parents or who are reasonably anticipated to be caregivers in the households of newborns being treated in NICUs.

Influenza vaccination is not licensed for children aged less than six months and antiviral medications are not licensed for use in infants less than 12 months of age. Therefore, protection of young infants, who have hospitalization rates similar to those observed among the elderly, depends on vaccination of infants' close contacts. By providing parents and caregivers of these high-risk infants with the opportunity to receive influenza vaccination while in NICUs, those infants receive some protection against influenza disease.

Requirement for admitted persons age sixty-five years or older. PHL 2805-h also contains a requirement that the administrative officer, or other person in charge of each general hospital, must offer influenza vaccine to each admitted person aged 65 years or older. The requirement, effective since 2006, applies for all patients admitted between September 1 and April 1.

We strongly encourage you to continue in your vaccination efforts against influenza and plan for the 2012 – 2013 season. Please review your influenza vaccine purchasing options and assess the needs of your practice or organization.

Hospitals must take steps to adopt and implement both policies as required under law. Should you need further assistance, please call the NYSDOH Bureau of Immunization at 518-473-4437.

Sincerely,

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Deputy Commissioner
Office of Public Health