

January 13, 2013

TO: Health Care Providers, Hospitals, Pharmacists, and Local Health Departments

FROM: New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Immunization

**HEALTH ADVISORY: EXECUTIVE ORDER ALLOWS PHARMACISTS TO
VACCINATE CHILDREN AGE SIX MONTHS TO 18 YEARS**

Please distribute to the Infection Control Department, Emergency Department, Employee Health Services, Infectious Disease Department, Director of Nursing, Medical Director, Pharmacy Department, Pediatrics, Obstetrics and all primary care providers.

SUMMARY

- Between January 12 and February 11, 2013 pharmacists can administer flu vaccinations to patients between six months and 18 years of age.
- The expansion of pharmacists' ability to vaccinate is the result of an Executive Order from Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, which suspends the section of State Education Law that limits the authority of pharmacists to administer immunizing agents only to individuals 18 years of age or older, for the next 30 days. The Executive Order was issued in response to this year's severe influenza season in an effort to remove as many barriers as possible to people getting influenza vaccination. The order may be extended for additional 30 day periods if the emergency condition persists.
- In addition, due to the severe influenza season and insufficient levels of vaccine, the New York State Commissioner of Health is authorizing use of influenza vaccines containing more than the mercury levels described in Public Health Law (PHL) § 2112 in pregnant women and children under age 3.
- **Importantly, as described in PHL § 2168, pharmacists must report all vaccinations of patients between six months and 18 years of age to the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS), except for residents of New York City, who must be reported to the City Immunization Registry (CIR).**
- **Standing orders that are in place for pharmacists to administer vaccines may have to be changed to allow vaccination of children ages six months to 18 years.**

BACKGROUND

New York State is currently experiencing high levels of influenza disease throughout the state. The State's influenza activity level has been at "widespread", the highest category, for the past seven weeks. Indicators of influenza activity including hospitalizations for confirmed influenza, emergency department visits for influenza-like-illness (ILI), sentinel provider reports of the

proportion of patients with ILI, and laboratory reporting of positive influenza results are elevated in most areas of the state greatly exceeding normal levels for this time of year. There have also been two pediatric deaths due to influenza disease in New York State.

For these reasons, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo has declared a "Disaster Emergency" for New York State in response to this year's increasingly severe flu season. The emergency declaration allowed the Governor to issue an Executive Order which allows pharmacists to administer influenza vaccinations to patients between six months and 18 years of age. This Order suspends for the 30 days the section of State Education Law that limits the authority of pharmacists to administer immunizing agents only to individuals 18 years of age or older. The order may be extended for additional 30 day periods if the emergency condition persists.

In addition, the Commissioner of Health has determined that there are insufficient supplies of influenza vaccines that contain the mercury levels set forth in PHL §2112 (2) and (3), and, therefore, has authorized the use of vaccine containing any level of thimerosal for children under 3 years of age and pregnant women.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR VACCINATION OF CHILDREN

The NYSDOH anticipates ongoing and potential increase in demand for influenza vaccine among all age groups over the coming weeks. Pharmacists are encouraged to continue to administer the influenza vaccine to adults and to actively promote the availability of pharmacist-delivered vaccine to children between six months and 18 years of age. Those under six months of age cannot get a flu vaccination

Importantly, pharmacists must report all vaccinations of patients between six months and 18 years of age to the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS) or the City Immunization Registry (CIR). Vaccines administered to children in NYS except for the five boroughs of New York City (NYC) should be reported to NYSIIS. Vaccines administered within the five boroughs of NYC should be reported to the CIR. Detailed information about NYSIIS, including technical requirements and data exchange information is available at <http://goo.gl/6VE3c>. Similar CIR resources can be found at www.nyc.gov/health/cir.

In addition, **pharmacists must ensure that standing orders issued to allow immunization be modified to include children age six months to 18 years.** Examples of standing orders can be found on the website of the Immunization Action Coalition at <http://www.immunize.org/standing-orders/>.

VACCINE SUPPLY

Vaccine supply available for purchase by providers is very limited at this time. The Department has received many calls from providers asking where to refer their patients for vaccination. In this circumstance, every effort must be made to eliminate barriers to influenza vaccination of children and pregnant women. Providers may still have supplies of these multi-dose vials of influenza vaccines containing thimerosal, which are licensed for use in young children and pregnant women. Such providers should not have to turn away children or pregnant women seeking vaccination because they do not have thimerosal-free vaccine. Though a limited amount of thimerosal-free vaccine may still be available for purchase from some distributors, the Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention indicates that even such limited supplies will not be available much longer and many medical providers and local health departments are unable to purchase additional thimerosal-free vaccine for their patients.

If you are having difficulty obtaining additional influenza vaccine, an extremely useful resource is the Influenza Vaccine Availability tracking System (IVATS). IVATS is supported by the National Influenza Vaccine Summit at <http://goo.gl/aXOo1>.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional detailed information regarding ACIP 2012-13 influenza recommendations is accessible at <http://goo.gl/ULrLH>.

Other resources on influenza are available on the NYSDOH public website at <http://goo.gl/dLDrw> and on the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>.

For additional information please contact the New York State Department of Health Bureau of Immunization at 518-473-4437 or immunize@health.state.ny.us, or the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene at 347-396-2400 or nycimmunize@health.nyc.gov.