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TO: Healthcare Providers, Clinical Laboratories, Hospitals, Long Term Care Facilities, Healthcare Facilities, and Local Health Departments

FROM: NYSDOH Division of Epidemiology, Bureau of Communicable Disease Control, Bureau of Immunization and Bureau of Healthcare Associated Infections

**HEALTH ADVISORY:
UPDATE ON INFLUENZA PREVENTION, SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL**

For healthcare facilities, please distribute immediately to the Infection Control Department, Emergency Department, Infectious Disease Department, Director of Nursing, Medical Director, Director of Pharmacy, Laboratory Service, and all inpatient and outpatient patient care areas.

Purpose

Due to elevated influenza activity in New York State (NYS), this advisory provides updated influenza prevention, surveillance and control guidance along with links and references to influenza resources.

Influenza Surveillance Summary

The 2019-20 influenza season started earlier than it has in the past three seasons. Influenza activity has not yet peaked, there have been steep increases in cases in the last few weeks, and it is expected to continue to increase in the upcoming weeks. Surveillance data indicates that influenza A(H1) and influenza B(Victoria) virus are co-circulating with the predominate virus type varying by region. Influenza A(H1) is the predominate virus in the New York City, Metropolitan/Hudson Valley and Capital District regions, while influenza B(Victoria) is the predominate virus in Central and Western regions. While influenza viruses can cause severe illness in people of all ages, influenza A(H1) and influenza B viruses are known to cause disproportionately more severe illness in young children, adolescents and middle-aged adults. Since October 5, 2019 there have been 22,763 laboratory-confirmed influenza cases and 3,592 hospitalizations reported, with 61% of all laboratory-confirmed cases occurring in persons aged 5–49 years and 79% of hospitalizations in persons aged 18 and older. There has been one influenza-associated pediatric death this season.

For more information, please see these additional resources:

- Influenza activity data is available on the Flu Tracker at <https://nyshc.health.ny.gov/web/nyapd/new-york-state-flu-tracker>.
- Weekly influenza surveillance reports are available at <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/surveillance/>.
- Weekly nationwide influenza updates are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivitysurv.htm>.
- Governor Cuomo Reminds New Yorkers to Get Vaccinated as Flu Cases Increase in New York State: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-reminds-new-yorkers-get-vaccinated-flu-cases-increase-new-york-state>.

Influenza Vaccine Recommendations

NYSDOH continues to strongly advise that all persons aged 6 months and older get the influenza vaccine immediately if they have not yet been vaccinated. It is not too late to get vaccinated for

influenza. Typically, influenza cases are reported well into the spring. Vaccine effectiveness (VE) estimates are not yet available because it is too early in the season. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will release preliminary VE results later in the season; however antigenic characterization data indicate that the influenza A(H1) and influenza B(Yamagata) viruses circulating are antigenically similar to the viruses in the 2019-20 influenza vaccine. Influenza A(H3) and influenza B(Victoria) show some similarity to the vaccine viruses. Antigenic data are limited due to the small number of virus tested and only provides an early insight for VE. VE in recent years has been higher for influenza A(H1) and influenza B, further reinforcing the importance of promoting vaccine for patients this season.

- Influenza vaccination is especially important for persons who are at high risk for influenza-related complications, including pregnant women (http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm). Pregnant women are especially vulnerable to influenza complications including severe illness, hospitalization, and premature labor and delivery. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that pregnant women receive inactivated influenza vaccine at any time during their pregnancy.
- People who take care of, or live with, individuals who are at high risk for influenza-related complications should also be vaccinated against influenza. All healthcare workers should be vaccinated because of the risk of acquiring and transmitting influenza to others.

Influenza vaccine remains available for purchase in NYS.

- A list of all vaccine formulations and manufacturers is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/vaccines.htm>.
- Providers who do not have unexpired influenza vaccine in stock, and need assistance finding influenza vaccine in the community can use the vaccine finder at <http://www.vaccinefinder.org>.
- Providers enrolled in the Vaccines for Children (VFC) can place additional influenza vaccine orders for their eligible children in the New York State Immunization Information System (NYSIIS). Please note that influenza vaccine doses administered must be accurately reported to NYSIIS before additional orders will be approved. If you have any questions, please call the VFC Call Center at 1-800-543-7468.

Diagnostic Testing, Antiviral Treatment, and Chemoprophylaxis Recommendations

Influenza antiviral treatment decisions should not be delayed pending testing results, nor should they be made based solely upon the results.

- Detailed information regarding use and interpretation of influenza diagnostic tests, including rapid antigen tests (RATs, also known as rapid influenza diagnostic tests or RIDTs), RT-PCR, and other molecular methods is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/index.htm>.
- Current CDC recommendations for antiviral treatment and chemoprophylaxis of influenza are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/antivirals/>.
- Article 28 healthcare facilities should follow the recommendations for follow-up of respiratory disease outbreaks of influenza and influenza-like illness in health care facilities at http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/control/respiratory_disease_checklist.htm.
- Pharmacies that can fill antiviral prescriptions can be found at <http://www.medfinder.org>.

Additional Information

Detailed information regarding ACIP 2019-2020 influenza vaccine recommendations is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/acip/index.htm>. For additional information about vaccine, please contact the Bureau of Immunization at 518-473-4437 (immunize@health.ny.gov).

Questions or concerns about surveillance, diagnostic testing, treatment and/or chemoprophylaxis should be directed to the Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at 518-473-4439 (bcdc@health.ny.gov), except for those related to Article 28 healthcare facilities, for which the Bureau of Healthcare Associated

Infections (BHA) serves as the point of contact. BHA staff can be reached at 518–474–1142 (icp@health.ny.gov).

Other resources on influenza are available on the NYSDOH website at <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/influenza/seasonal/> and on the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>.