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Bulletin No.28 December 8, 2004

<http://www.epi.Alaska.gov/>

2004-2005 Influenza Vaccine Recommendations Broadened

Effective December 8, 2004, Alaska's influenza vaccine recommendations are being broadened to include those persons for whom vaccine was targeted prior to this season's vaccine shortage. Because vaccine availability is still limited, this expansion does not include vaccination of members of the general population who do not fall into a targeted group. Specific details about the expansion of Alaska's vaccine recommendation are outlined below.

BACKGROUND

On September 27, 2004 the Alaska Section of Epidemiology issued recommendations for use of influenza vaccine that targeted groups at highest risk for complications and persons who could transmit influenza to these high-risk individuals.¹

Following the October 5, 2004 announcement that approximately half of the expected supply of influenza vaccine in the U.S. would be unavailable this season, the Alaska Division of Public Health (DPH) issued revised recommendations restricting vaccine use to those persons (including infants) at greatest risk of complications, health care workers providing direct patient care, and out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children less than 6 months of age.²

THE U.S. AND ALASKA EXPERIENCE

Since the restricted recommendations were issued, the Alaska Division of Public Health has distributed additional vaccine as it has become available, closely monitored vaccine inventories in public and private provider offices, and redistributed vaccine where appropriate. Numerous outreach efforts have been conducted around the state in an effort to provide vaccine to high risk Alaskans.

The disparity in vaccine availability between states appears to be lessening and is being addressed at a national level by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As a result, CDC has issued new guidance and expanded the options for states to utilize currently available vaccine.³

REVISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective immediately, the Alaska Division of Public Health is revising the recommendations for use of influenza vaccine. Providers may utilize available influenza vaccine for persons who were identified in the original target groups in September, prior to the vaccine shortage.¹

Alaska providers may utilize vaccine currently available in their offices to reach these expanded targeted groups. Additional vaccine orders may be placed through the Alaska Vaccine Depot utilizing standard vaccine ordering procedures. (Call the Alaska Vaccine Depot at 341-2202 if you have questions about this process.)

UPDATED INFLUENZA VACCINATION TARGET GROUPS

NOTE: Groups designated with a "+" have been added or expanded from the October "High Risk Only" recommendations.

Persons at Increased Risk for Complications

- Persons ≥ 65 years of age or older.
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities housing persons of any age with chronic medical conditions.
- Adults and children who have chronic disorders of the pulmonary or cardiovascular systems, including asthma.
- Adults and children who have required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the preceding year because of chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes mellitus), renal dysfunction, hemoglobinopathies, or immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by Human Immunodeficiency Virus).
- Children and adolescents (aged 6 months - 18 years) receiving long-term aspirin therapy (might be at risk for developing Reye syndrome after influenza infection).
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season.

Persons Age 50-64 Years

- + To increase the traditionally low vaccination rates among persons in this age group (many of whom may have high risk conditions), influenza vaccine is recommended for all persons 50-64 years of age.

Persons Who Can Transmit Influenza to the High Risk

- + Physicians, nurses, and other personnel in both hospital and outpatient-care settings, including medical emergency response workers (e.g., paramedics and emergency medical technicians.) (*expanded from October recommendation*)
- + Employees of nursing homes and chronic-care facilities who have contact with patients or residents.
- + Employees of assisted living and other residences for persons in groups at increased risk.
- + Persons who provide home care to persons in high-risk groups.
- + Household members (including children) of persons in groups at high risk.
- + Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children 0-23 months of age. (*expanded from October recommendation of children 0-6 months of age*)

Infants 6 - 23 months of age

- Because children aged 6-23 months are at substantially increased risk for influenza-related hospitalizations, vaccination of all children in this age group is recommended.

¹ 2004-2005 Influenza Vaccine: Indications & Administration. *Bulletin* No. 19, September 27, 2004.

² Revised Influenza Vaccination Recommendations for Alaska - 2004-05 Influenza Season. *Bulletin* No. 20, October 7, 2004.

³ CDC Health Update 00218. Update on Flu Vaccine Allocation. <http://www.phppo.cdc.gov/HAN/ArchiveSvs/ViewMsgV.asp?AlertNum=00218>