

Influenza Vaccine Bulletin #10

November 27, 2001

The National Immunization Program (NIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is publishing and distributing periodic bulletins to update partners about recent developments related to the production, distribution and administration of influenza vaccine for the 2001-2002 influenza season. All recipients of this bulletin are encouraged to distribute each issue widely to colleagues, members and constituents.

Influenza Vaccine Supply and Production

An updated projection of influenza vaccine supply reflects an increase in the total number of doses for the 2001-2002 season.

- Projected distribution of influenza vaccine for 2001 has increased to approximately 87 million doses. Much of the vaccine will be distributed by the end of November, with the final 15 percent expected to be distributed in December. **People who have not yet been immunized, particularly those at high risk of complications from influenza, should continue seeking vaccine in November, December, and beyond, until they are immunized. Practitioners and clinics should continue to offer vaccine, particularly to high-risk individuals, through December and beyond, as long as supplies last.** Although October and November are the optimal months to receive influenza vaccine, people (especially those at high risk) will still benefit from influenza vaccine later, even in communities where influenza cases are occurring.

Influenza Vaccine Distribution and Administration

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is ensuring that payment rates for influenza vaccine are determined in accordance with Medicare's payment methodology.

- In response to concerns raised by physicians and other health care professionals about Medicare payment rates for influenza vaccine, CMS has contacted Medicare carriers throughout the United States to review the methodology used to determine payment rates for influenza vaccines. When necessary, CMS worked with carriers to properly update the payment rates for influenza vaccines. Currently, all Medicare carriers are applying the correct methodology for calculation of the influenza vaccine payment rate and are making payments to physicians and providers at the appropriate rate. CMS will continue to ensure that payment rates for influenza vaccines are determined in accordance with Medicare's payment methodology. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.hcfa.gov/medicare/incardir.htm>

Influenza vaccine is still available for purchase.

- Influenza vaccine from all three of the manufacturers licensed to distribute in the U.S. is now available and ready for immediate shipment. Health care providers who are seeking influenza vaccine can order from Aventis Pasteur at 1-800-822-2463, Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories at 1-800-358-7443, or Henry Schein or its GIV or Caligor Divisions at 1-800-772-4346, 1-800-521-7468, or 1-888-225-4467 respectively.

Influenza and Influenza Vaccine Communication

CDC has developed a flyer to help clinicians determine differences in signs and symptoms caused by influenza, inhalational anthrax and influenza-like illness from other causes.

- The flyer is available on the CDC influenza website at www.cdc.gov/nip/flu.htm. Information on the flyer is taken from a recent Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) article entitled “Considerations for Distinguishing Influenza-Like Illness from Inhalational Anthrax” (MMWR 2001;50:984-6).

Influenza surveillance through November 17 indicates limited influenza activity in the United States.

- The overall proportion of patient visits to sentinel physicians for influenza-like illness was 1.2 %, which is less than the national baseline of 1.9%. The proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza was 6.6%, which is below the epidemic threshold of 7.3% for week 46. Four state and territorial health departments reported regional influenza activity, 19 reported sporadic influenza activity and 24 reported no influenza activity. For more information, and to view weekly updates, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/weekly.htm>