

 **STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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Nirav R. Shah, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

James W. Clyne, Jr.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

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Dear Colleague:

The New York State Department of Health is encouraging health care facilities to pre-book influenza vaccine now to ensure that a sufficient amount of vaccine will be available to protect their vulnerable patients and employees for the 2011-2012 influenza season. Annual influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons aged 6 months and older. Two formulations (the “flu shot” and the nasal spray) are available to protect the majority of the population.

Timeliness in placing your order for influenza vaccine is a critical component of your purchasing plan. Influenza vaccines take months to produce and vaccine manufacturers are hesitant to take on the risk of producing products they will be unable to sell. As a result, pre-booking vaccine orders generally takes place in January or February, even though most health systems are still administering influenza vaccine for the current influenza season.

It is important that your practices develop an influenza vaccine purchasing plan that allows you to meet the needs of your patients and employees. Flu seasons are unpredictable and can begin earlier or last longer than expected, so plan ahead in order to protect your patients and employees. You should be reviewing your influenza vaccine purchasing options and assessing the needs of your organization.

For more information on distributors and influenza vaccine availability, please visit the following websites:

Influenza Vaccine Distributor Information
<http://www.flusupplynews.com/resources.cfm>

Influenza Vaccine Availability Tracking System (IVATS)
http://www.preventinfluenza.org/ivats/ivats_healthcare.asp

We strongly encourage you to plan for the next influenza season and order influenza vaccine now. Should you need further assistance, please call the NYSDOH Bureau of Immunization at 518-473-4437.

Sincerely,



Guthrie S. Birkhead, M.D., M.P.H.
Deputy Commissioner
Office of Public Health