



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES

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JON S. CORZINE
Governor

www.nj.gov/health

HEATHER HOWARD
Commissioner

November 30, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian:

The purpose of this memo is to inform parents and guardians that due to limited seasonal influenza vaccine availability, children 6 through 59 months who do not receive the vaccine by December 31, 2009 will not be excluded from licensed preschool and child care for the 2009 – 2010 academic year.

This temporary suspension is based on delays in vaccine production with a resultant delay in delivery and supply shortage within New Jersey. The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (Department) received multiple inquiries from health care providers, parents and guardians concerning influenza vaccine, difficulties in locating seasonal vaccine, and the requirement for seasonal influenza immunization of children in licensed preschool and child care. Furthermore, the CDC stated on November 9, 2009, that up to 114 million doses of seasonal flu vaccine may be produced this year but did not know the exact timetable for getting the doses. The Department will not enforce the mandate since it cannot predict when the vaccine will be available in New Jersey.

Influenza is an infectious viral respiratory disease that causes illness to persons of all ages each year. The major complication of influenza is pneumonia. Children less than two years of age are hospitalized as often as adults 65 years of age and older. Infants and preschool-aged children are thought to spread this disease to other susceptible healthy people or people at high-risk for complications from influenza. The Department strongly recommends that all children 6 months through 59 months of age attending any child-care center or preschool facility receive at least one dose of influenza vaccine as soon as the vaccine becomes available. The Department believes that vaccinating preschool-aged children will decrease the incidence of influenza among children and adults.

Earlier this week, in collaboration with the federal government, Google Inc. launched a flu shot finder to provide individuals with the locations of clinics that offer vaccines. This site can be accessed through the Department's website at <http://nj.gov/health/flu/h1n1.shtml>. It allows the public to search by town, county and zip code to find flu shots at locations such as major retail pharmacies and supermarkets. The site also includes the public health clinics that have been listed on the Department's "Find a Flu Shot" button. The website can also be accessed at www.google.com/flushot.

The Department is also recommending that individuals contact their physician, community health center, local pharmacy, local or county health department, hospital or school to check for available seasonal vaccine. Many doctors, health clinics and schools are providing vaccine to their patients and students, while local health departments, pharmacies and some hospitals are offering clinics to the public.

The Department continues to recommend seasonal flu vaccine for all children age 6 months to 18 years because children are vulnerable to flu-related complications, including death.

Respectfully yours,

Barbara Mintona MD

Barbara Montana, MD, MPH, FACP
Medical Director
Communicable Disease Service