

All Children Need Flu Shots: Order Vaccine Early

Plan now to offer influenza vaccinations to all children 6 months through 18 years of age in your practice next fall. In 2008, national recommendations for annual influenza vaccinations were expanded to include school-aged children 5 through 18 years of age. School-aged children typically have the highest attack rates during community influenza outbreaks and are a major source of transmission within communities. In fact, school-aged children are up to four times more likely to be infected with influenza than adults. Influenza has substantial adverse impacts among school-aged children and their contacts, including school absenteeism, increased antibiotic use, medical care visits, and parental work loss.

Now is the time to order 2009-2010 vaccine to ensure that you will have it for the start of the influenza vaccination season. Influenza vaccine may be ordered directly from the manufacturer or a distributor. Ordering information can be found at www.preventinfluenza.org/professionals.asp.

Remember that California law prohibits the administration of mercury-containing vaccines to persons who are pregnant or younger than three years of age. For children aged 6-35 months only one licensed trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine (TIV) product meets the standards set by the law: Sanofi Pasteur's Fluzone®, No preservative: Pediatric Dose (0.25 mL). Live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV) from MedImmune (FluMist™), which is licensed for use by healthy non-pregnant persons 2-49 year of age, is also preservative free. Vaccines that meet the state's standard for pregnant adolescents and women are:

- Sanofi Pasteur's Fluzone® No Preservative 0.05 mL single dose vials or prefilled syringes for persons aged 3 years and over
- Novartis' Fluvirin™ prefilled syringes for persons aged 4 years and over and
- GlaxoSmithKline's Fluarix™ or CSL Biotherapies' Afluria® prefilled syringes licensed for persons aged 18 years and older.

This is also a great time to start planning ahead for your flu vaccination promotional and educational efforts. Consider integrating flu vaccination reminders into your reminder/recall system, distributing patient and staff educational materials, and providing staff vaccinations.

Resources including patient and parent information and forms to support your vaccination efforts can be found on the following websites:

- California Department of Public Health Immunization Branch: www.getimmunizedca.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/flu
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Immunization Program: www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip
- National Influenza Vaccine Summit: www.preventinfluenza.org

