

**New Jersey Dept. of Health and Senior Services
Influenza Vaccination Frequency Asked Questions (FAQ)**

Date: October 1, 2010

NJ Influenza Vaccination Requirements

Will the seasonal influenza vaccine be a requirement for the 2010-2011 academic year?

Yes, it remains a requirement as per N.J.A.C. 8:57-4.19 unless the Commissioner or his or her designee temporarily suspends the requirement due to limited vaccine availability.

As per N.J.A.C. 8:57-4.19, children six months through 59 months of age attending any licensed child care center, or preschool facility on or after September 1, 2008, shall annually receive at least one dose of influenza vaccine between September 1 and December 31 of each year.

How many doses of the seasonal influenza vaccine are required for preschool/child care attendance?

Per NJAC 8:57-4.19, only 1 dose of seasonal flu vaccine is required for children 6-59 months of age attending child care/preschool. However, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)/Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) children under 9 years of age who have never received a seasonal influenza vaccine are recommended to receive 2 doses to be fully protected.

Why did the state health department make the influenza vaccine requirement only apply to preschool and licensed child care facilities?

Influenza is responsible for approximately 200,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths each year in the United States. Hospitalization rates for influenza for children 12 months of age and younger are comparable to rates of persons 65 years and older. Among children 0 to 4 years of age, hospitalization rates due to influenza have varied from 100 per 100,000 healthy children to as high as 500 per 100,000 for children with underlying medical conditions. To reduce the risk of hospitalization from complications of influenza, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommend routine annual influenza vaccination of children 6 months to 18 years of age. However, annual vaccination of all children aged 6 months--4 years (59 months) and older children with

conditions that place them at increased risk for complications from influenza should continue to be a primary focus of vaccination efforts.

With regard to the influenza vaccine, a study in *The American Journal of Epidemiology* supports the idea of vaccinating all preschool children. The study tracked influenza cases by age groups and found that preschoolers were the first to be seen in flu-related doctor visits, with sick adults following about 29 days later. The findings revealed that flu like illness in children under age five, compared with all other age groups, was the most predictive of pneumonia and influenza deaths in the general population.

Is the flu vaccine required after January 1st for children coming in at that time or had not gotten it between Sept. 1-Dec. 31 of the prior year?

Yes, the flu vaccine is still required for children after January 1. As we all know, the flu season may not peak until February. The flu season can also extend until May in some cases. So getting a flu vaccine even late in the season is protective.

Why then do the regulations specify a specific time frame?

1. Most flu vaccine is distributed to health care providers (HCPs) by October and November each year so most HCPs should have their supplies at that time. 2. We also know that public requests for flu vaccine peaks around September to December. 3. If we can get a majority of children immunized within that four month timeframe, it will make monitoring the immunization status of a large number of children more manageable by the school or public health agency.

How much time after December 31 of a given year do I have to get my child vaccinated with the flu vaccine?

Students who do not receive the vaccine by December 31st will be excluded from school for the duration of influenza season (through March 31st) or until they receive at least one dose of the influenza vaccine.

How should a school enforce the flu vaccine regulation for those students who have not received the flu shot after December 31st?

Students who have not received the flu vaccine by December 31st must be excluded from school for the duration of influenza season (through March 31st) or until they receive at least one dose of the influenza vaccine.

What if I am enrolling my child in January of the following year, is my child exempt from getting the mandatory flu vaccine?

No, the flu vaccine is still required for children after January 1. Flu season may not peak until February and can also extend until May in some cases. Getting a flu vaccine even late in the season is still protective.

If you enroll your child after December 31st, you must provide documentation that your child received the flu vaccine prior to entering school.

Is it acceptable for a child to receive flu vaccine in August when the regulations specifically state to receive one flu dose between September 1 to December 31 of each year?

Children who get vaccinated with the seasonal flu vaccine prior to September 1, will be considered compliant and these vaccinations will be accepted and count toward the mandate requirement.

Where can a family go to get the flu vaccine if the pediatrician does not have any more flu vaccine?

If your pediatrician/ health care provider (HCP) cannot provide the flu vaccine for you within the given time frame of September 1- December 31st, documentation within that time frame stating that you have an appointment to receive the flu vaccine from your HCP would be acceptable.

If a national flu vaccine shortage has not been declared and your HCP cannot guarantee an adequate supply of flu vaccine, other alternatives must be sought by the family. Options include:

1. Seeking out another HCP who can administer flu vaccine to children;
2. Checking with your local health department to see if they will administer flu vaccine to children less than 18 years of age;
3. Contacting your local public health clinic/Federally Qualified Health care Centers (FQHCs):

<http://nj.gov/health/fhs/cphc/documents/locations.pdf>

(Note: anyone is eligible to receive service at a local public health clinic);

4. Checking your local newspaper for flu clinic listings and verifying that they have flu vaccine available. As a reminder, local health departments and FQHCs purchase flu vaccine through the Vaccine for Children (VFC) Program. A child must qualify to receive VFC vaccine; to view those eligibility requirements, go to the NJ VFC brochure for health care providers: <https://njiis.nj.gov/njiis/docs/C1567.pdf>

5. Check the Department's internet address for the Find a Flu Shot Locator at <http://nj.gov/health/flu/findflushot.shtml>, or to www.google.com/flushot for vaccine clinics.

What if there is a flu vaccine shortage or a flu vaccine distribution problem?

The influenza vaccine regulation states that children six months through 59 months of age enrolling in or attending a child-care center or preschool facility on or after September 1, 2008, shall annually receive at least one dose of influenza vaccine between September 1 and December 31 of each year. After December 31, a student will be considered delinquent.

As far as distribution and shortages are concerned, the NJ regulations state the following: In the event of a national or state vaccine supply shortage, as determined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Commissioner, respectively, the Commissioner or his or her designee may temporarily suspend the immunization requirement for the particular immunization affected by the supply shortage, after provision of notice to the public via print and electronic news media, NJLINCS, electronic posting on the Department's website, etc.

Is flu vaccine required after March?

No, students enrolling in school after March 31st are not required to get vaccinated; however, flu season may extend until May and therefore getting a flu vaccine even late in the season is still protective.