

Public Health

Seattle & King County

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In this issue:

- Flu vaccine for pregnant women protects their newborns against influenza
- Public Health Launches New Web Site
- Save the Date—April 17, 2009—for “Immunization Update: Emerging Issues and New Directions”
- VFC News
- Did You Know.....About Timing of Influenza Vaccine?
- Make sure you’re using the most current Vaccine Information Statements (VIS)

Flu vaccine for pregnant women protects their newborns against influenza

A new study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that infants whose mothers receive the flu vaccine while pregnant are protected from the virus for the first five to six months of their lives. Researchers studied 340 women in Bangladesh and determined that **flu shots in the mothers reduced infant influenza cases by 63 percent**. Additionally, the respiratory infections in both the infants and their mothers fell by 30 percent. The study indicates that 14 respiratory illnesses with fever were avoided for every 100 flu vaccinations, along with seven such infections in mothers. Although this study by itself is not conclusive, it does suggest that the benefits of maternal immunization may extend to the newborn.

Immunization of pregnant women with inactivated trivalent influenza vaccine has been recommended in the United States for more than a decade and by the World Health Organization (WHO) since 2005. However, few mothers receive the vaccine. Influenza vaccine is not licensed for infants younger than 6 months of age, so vaccinating mothers during pregnancy, as well as household contacts are important measures to protect the infant in the first 6 months.

Infection with influenza virus is associated with serious illness and hospitalization among pregnant women and young infants, including neonates. Maternal influenza infection has been associated with an increased risk of maternal hospitalization, fetal malformation, and other illnesses. Influenza infection in young infants often prompts hospitalization, and can predispose the infants to bacterial pneumonia or otitis media. Studies from North America and Hong Kong have shown high rates of hospitalization among infants with influenza, especially those under 6 months of

age. The rate of hospitalization for such infants is higher than that for other high-risk groups. A national survey in the United States showed that childhood deaths associated with influenza are most frequent in infants under the age of 6 months.

You can find the article, “Effectiveness of Maternal Influenza Immunization in Mothers and Infant” by K. Zaman, M.B., B.S., Ph.D., et al., online at <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/NEJMoa0708630?resourcetype=HWCIT>

Public Health launches new website

As of October 10, the Public Health - Seattle & King County website has a new address and a new look and feel. **The new address for the Public Health main page is www.kingcounty.gov/health**. We're making these changes as part of a larger effort by King County to 1) implement a more user-friendly, reliable and easier to manage web site and 2) retire the old metrokc.gov web address by the end of 2008. These are changes for the better, but they may create some short-term inconveniences. We wanted to let you know now so that you can plan for them, and avoid any surprises:

1) Our current web page addresses (except for the main web page) will not re-direct to the equivalent web page on the new web site. Instead, you will be re-directed to our new main web page address (www.kingcounty.gov/health) through the end of 2008. You can use our search engine or categorical directory to find the page you want on the new site, and then add a bookmark when you find it.

2) Starting in 2009, all of the links to the old Public Health website (and all www.metrokc.gov/ addresses) will no longer work at all. If you have web links or printed materials that include our old address, please work to update them before the end of the year.

3) We have created alias, or short cut, addresses for many of our key programs, so you won't have to type out the full URL to get to the page. The alias for the Immunization Program will be www.kingcounty.gov/health/immunization.

We hope you enjoy our new website, and continue to find it a trusted, relevant, and comprehensive source for health information in our community. As always, we welcome your feedback on ways we can continually make it better.

Training Opportunity: Save the Date—Friday, April 17, 2009 for “Immunization Update: Emerging Issues and New Directions”

This full-day conference at Swedish Medical Center First Hill Campus in Seattle is designed for members of the primary-care team including practicing physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners in the areas of family, general, internal, and pediatric medicine, and other practitioners involved in immunization. For more information about the conference, please visit www.swedish.org/cme, e-mail cme.registration@swedish.org, or call 206-386-2755. This event is sponsored by Swedish Medical Center, in collaboration with the Immunization Action Coalition of Washington and the Washington State Department of Health.



Vaccines For Children

Program News and Alerts

CHANGE OF BRANDS FOR Tdap

As of October 1, the VFC Program is distributing Boostrix brand of Tdap. This formulation is licensed for children aged 10 through 18 years.

INFLUENZA VACCINE

State-supplied influenza vaccine is now available. All providers who have placed an order should have received at least a portion of their request. For those placing large orders, let us know when you are ready to receive another shipment. Contact the VFC Program at (206) 296-4774 if you need to place an order. All children 6 months of age up to the 19th birthday are eligible for state-supplied influenza vaccine for the 2008-09 season.

HIB VACCINE AND PENTACEL

The Centers for Disease Control continue to increase the VFC Program's supply of Pentacel versus Hib vaccine. Providers interested in receiving Pentacel in lieu of Hib vaccine should contact the VFC Program. The same usage restrictions apply to Pentacel: give children the three primary doses (typically at 2, 4 and 6 months of age, or for catch-up) and defer the 4th dose (12-15 months) for healthy children. (Point was made yesterday during IACW meeting that kids older than 12-15 months who haven't received any doses of Hib should still receive one dose- this dose is not considered a booster just because it is being administered after 12 months of age).

BENCHMARKING

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) will be asking providers to provide an estimate of the VFC eligibility of their patient population, rather than benchmark individual patients during a specific month for the year 2008. Beginning in 2009, a new, daily point of service screening process will be introduced. We will share the details of this new system with you as they are announced by DOH.

NEW! VACCINE CHAMPIONS

Each month we will take the opportunity to express our appreciation for someone who has gone the extra mile, made a special effort, devised a new procedure—done anything that has helped to improve the quality of vaccine handling within their practice or clinic.

Our first Vaccine Champion Merit Badge goes to Dr. Sherri Zorn, of The Polyclinic/Pediatrics in downtown Seattle. Recently, Polyclinic Pediatrics received a huge shipment of influenza vaccine. When the vaccine had been packed into the refrigerator, Dr. Zorn noticed that the temperature was hovering at the high end of the safe storage range and not dropping. She checked on the temperature hourly throughout the evening and, when it became apparent that the refrigerator would not get cooler, she drove to the clinic at midnight and moved all the vaccine to other refrigerators that were working more reliably. Thank you and congratulations, Dr. Zorn!

Did you know...

...About timing of influenza vaccine?

- Start giving flu vaccine as soon as vaccine arrives to ensure that you'll have time to vaccinate as many people as possible before the peak in influenza activity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is recommending influenza vaccine for approximately 84% of the US population this year.
- To avoid missing opportunities to vaccinate, offer flu vaccine at routine healthcare visits starting now and continuing throughout the influenza season.
- Influenza activity can occur as early as October and usually peaks in February. In fact, a large proportion of cases occur in March and later.
- You can track weekly influenza activity in King County (including which strains are circulating) by clicking on influenza surveillance updates on Public Health's website, at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/communicable/diseases.aspx>
- Children aged 6 months up to their 9th birthday should receive two doses of flu vaccine at least 4 weeks apart during the first season they receive flu vaccine. If they only get one dose in the first season, they should get two doses in the second season.
- For more information visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/acip/timing.htm>

Make sure you're using the most current Vaccine Information Statements (VIS)!

An updated interim version of the **rotavirus** VIS, containing information about Rotarix, has been posted on CDC's Web site (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/default.htm#rota>). Providers should use their discretion about retaining stocks of the previous rotavirus VIS. The new VIS is preferred, but parents of infants receiving RotaTeq may be given the older VIS while stocks remain.

The Department of Health Immunization Program CHILD Profile will not be printing the interim VIS at this time, since we only supply RotaTeq vaccine. If you are administering the Rotarix vaccine and need the interim form, please download it from CDC's Web site at the link above.

Minor updates have also been made to a number of VIS (for details see VIS News at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/vis-news.htm#all). These changes represent minor housekeeping matters, and are NOT a reason for providers to replace their current stocks of any VIS. Affected VISs for state-supplied vaccines are DTaP, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, Hib, HPV, pneumococcal conjugate, pneumococcal polysaccharide, polio, rotavirus, shingles, and Tdap.

The Department of Health Immunization Program CHILD Profile will not be printing the updated VISs at this time. If you want to use the updated forms, please download them from CDC's Web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/default.htm>.

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