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February 23, 2011

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** North Carolina Immunization Program (NCIP) Participants

**FROM:** Beth Rowe-West, RN, BSN, Head  
Immunization Branch

**SUBJECT:** It’s not too late to vaccinate against the flu!

The purpose of this memo is to remind providers it’s not too late to vaccinate against the flu. Providers should look for opportunities to administer flu vaccine through February, March, and April. Although flu is active in N.C., the peak of the season has not yet occurred. Vaccinating your patients now will ensure they are protected when peak flu activity occurs. Remember state-supplied flu vaccine products are available for anyone six months of age and older (including any adult 19 years of age and older) who wishes to be immunized against influenza.

Some points you may be interested to pass along to your patients include:

- The circulating strains of influenza virus are well matched to the vaccine this year (>95% of viruses characterized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention so far). Some circulating influenza B strains are not well matched to the vaccine.
- There have been established cases of influenza disease in vaccinated patients this year, but the strains demonstrate no pattern. There is no indication that this year’s vaccine is ineffective.
- Historically, flu vaccines have been 70–90% effective in years when the circulating strains are well matched to the vaccine.
- Remember, people who are vaccinated can still get the flu, but they are much less likely to get it than people who aren’t vaccinated. Even if the proportion of vaccinated people who get the flu is small, the total number of infections could be large when there is a lot of flu activity.
- Since no vaccine is 100% effective, it’s important to also emphasize other prevention measures such as frequent hand washing, coughing into a tissue or your sleeve, and staying home from work or school while ill.

As is the case with all vaccines, Vaccine Information Statements (VISs) must be provided to every patient receiving a flu vaccine. Find flu VISs online at: [www.immunizenc.com/viss.htm](http://www.immunizenc.com/viss.htm). Weekly updates on flu activity in North Carolina can be found online at [www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/gcdc/flu1011.html](http://www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/gcdc/flu1011.html). Updated guidance for professionals regarding influenza can be found at [www.flu.nc.gov/flu/providers/](http://www.flu.nc.gov/flu/providers/).

Please take this opportunity to review your supply of flu vaccine, and order your vaccine by contacting the N.C. Immunization Branch Help Desk at 1-877-873-6247.

Thank you for your continued contributions to keeping North Carolinians healthy!

Remember to sign up to receive our e-newsletter, *Vax Facts*, in your email inbox. Log on to [www.immunizenc.com/enewsletter.htm](http://www.immunizenc.com/enewsletter.htm) for sign-up instructions and to review past editions.

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