



Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Programs:

Tips for Optimizing Practice Management

An obstetrician–gynecologist (ob-gyn) plays a crucial role in providing important information on influenza (flu) immunization for women and adolescent girls and in a pregnant woman's decision to get the seasonal flu vaccine, protecting her health and the health of her fetus. Offering the seasonal flu vaccine in the practice setting is the best way to ensure patients receive their immunization.

This guide provides tips to help optimize the flu immunization program in your obstetric–gynecologic practice. Please share this resource with the immunization coordinator, nurse, medical assistant, office manager, or other staff responsible for immunization management in your practice.

Ordering Vaccine

New flu vaccine inventory must be ordered every year because vaccine composition is reviewed annually and updated to match circulating flu viruses. There are steps practices can take when ordering to better manage the costs of vaccine purchasing.

Purchasing Options

Routes to take when purchasing a vaccine include the following:

- ▶ Direct from manufacturers (search online for the company name and “influenza vaccine ordering”)
- ▶ From a distributor, particularly the distributor from whom you buy your other medical supplies
- ▶ Through purchasing cooperatives or group purchasing organizations
- ▶ Through your parent institution such as your university or your health plan
- ▶ Through special programs conducted by your state or local health department

Getting the Best Rate

One method for securing a discounted rate is to explore group purchasing organizations or develop partnerships with nearby clinics to collectively make a larger order.

ADDITIONALLY, taking the time to research and compare prices can ensure you secure the best price per vaccine. For example, certain manufacturers or vendors accept returns of unused vaccine doses and will refund a percentage of the cost for returned doses. Other vendors may not accept returns at all. Factor in this information when determining the quantity to order and assessing financial implications.

When purchasing through the manufacturer, take advantage of any special pricing offers available based on when and how you order and pay. These might include the following:

- ▶ **Prebook discounts** allow you to purchase a vaccine at a lower price if you reserve doses well in advance of the upcoming flu season.
- ▶ **Prompt pay discounts** reflect a discount that vaccine manufacturers provide in exchange for a more rapid payment on account payables. The terms to receive the discount usually are favorable (eg, 60–90 days).
- ▶ **Website order discounts** provide discounts from the manufacturers for ordering their vaccines directly from their website. This allows them to promote their products to you and to track client activity more easily.
- ▶ **Promotions or sales** occur when vaccine manufacturers attempt to push inventory and influence ordering patterns by running promotions or sales. Pay attention to annual sales dates and structure ordering around the lower-price opportunities.
- ▶ **Credit cards** create opportunities in two ways. First, they extend payment terms (typically by an additional 30 days). Secondly, many credit cards offer payback in cash or other benefits (eg, airline miles). Note that you may risk excessive interest penalties if you violate the payment terms on your credit card.

Prebooking

- ▶ Flu vaccine prebooking (ordering doses for the **upcoming** flu season) usually begins in February, during the current flu season.
- ▶ In many cases, prebooking the flu vaccine offers a lower-price option. The closer the flu season is, the more prices generally increase.
- ▶ When prebooking, there are key factors to consider for determining the number of vaccine doses needed for the next season. These include the following:
 - The approximate number of new patients your practice gains each year (for example, if your practice sees a 3% annual increase in patients, plan to increase your prebooking order accordingly)
 - Your available storage (your practice must have enough storage space available for the vaccines)
- ▶ Strongly consider prebooking with more than one manufacturer or vendor to avoid issues if one company experiences a shortage.

Storage and Handling Requirements

Proper storage and handling of vaccines protects patients, safeguards the vaccine supply, and prevents avoidable costs associated with revaccination and replacement of vaccines.

Key requirements for proper storage and handling include the following:

- ▶ Your practice must have a designated, medical-grade refrigerator to store vaccines. Never store food or other items in your vaccine refrigerator.
 - Use a stand-alone refrigerator rather than a refrigerator-freezer combination or other units not designed for storing vaccines.

—Never, under any circumstances, store any vaccine in a dormitory or bar-style combined refrigerator and freezer unit.

- ▶ Review and document vaccine temperature a **minimum of two times** during each clinic workday to ensure correct temperatures are maintained (*ie, between 2°C and 8°C or between 36°F and 46°F for all refrigerated vaccines*).
- ▶ Use of a continuous monitoring and recording digital data logger is recommended. This data logger should have a current and valid Certificate of Calibration Testing, set at a minimum recording interval of every 30 minutes.
- ▶ Review vaccine expiration dates and rotate vaccine stock weekly.

More information on proper storage and handling can be found through the American Academy of Pediatrics and in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Vaccine Storage and Handling Toolkit*.

Reimbursement

Proper reimbursement is critical for a successful immunization program. By law, many vaccines are covered by health insurance plans at no cost sharing for patients.

Resources from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Immunization Action Coalition, and the National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit are available to help ensure appropriate billing and coding for vaccines, which should lead to optimum reimbursement levels.

For additional resources on vaccine administration, storage and handling, patient education, supply, pricing, group purchasing options, reimbursement and coding, and more, visit www.immunizationforwomen.org/fluprogramresources.php.

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