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CDC expects flu vaccine delays, but no shortages

by **Melissa Jenco** · News Content Editor

Physicians may experience delays in receiving some influenza vaccines this season, but no shortages are expected, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Manufacturers are expected to produce at least 171 million doses this season, while 147.8 million doses were distributed last season, according to Jeanne M. Santoli, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, chief of the CDC's Vaccine Supply and Assurance Branch.

Roughly 109.4 million doses have been distributed so far, on pace with this time last year, she told the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices Wednesday.

However, several companies are behind on shipments, including MedImmune/AstraZeneca, which is having "unforeseen challenges in the production of FluMist," according to a company representative. It has shipped 5 million doses so far and plans to distribute several million more by the end of November. All pre-booked orders will be filled, and production will continue to fill late-season needs.

Meanwhile, Sanofi Pasteur is about two to three weeks behind due to the complexity of filling orders for diverse products, according to Phil Hosbach, vice president of new products and immunization policy for the manufacturer. Distribution of pre-booked Fluzone in prefilled syringes, including 0.25 milliliter pediatric syringes, will wrap up by the end of November. Distribution of Fluzone in unit-dose vials, multi-dose vials and intradermal form already is complete, and additional doses are available for immediate shipment.

Both companies say they are using partial shipments to distribute vaccines as they become available.

"That's a way to get as much vaccine to as many people to support vaccination even when all the vaccine is not yet available," Dr. Santoli said.

Thus far, flu activity in the U.S. has been low, and circulating viruses appear to be similar to those in this season's vaccine, according to Lynnette Brammer, M.P.H., an epidemiologist with the CDC.

"This suggests that vaccination with Northern Hemisphere influenza vaccine should offer protection against the majority of circulating viruses analyzed to date and may offer significantly more protection compared to last season's vaccine," she said.

Resources

- AAP News story on the Academy's influenza guidance, bit.ly/1W4Gk8v
- AAP vaccine supply updates, bit.ly/1PAWe02 (login required)
- CDC's influenza website, www.cdc.gov/flu/