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Mark Your Calendars:

Winter Symposium: Joint Meeting with Ga OBGYN Society
Atlanta Airport Marriott, Atlanta
February 21, 2015

CDC ACIP Meeting
February 25-26, 2015

Flu Outbreak Spreading Rapidly in U.S.
CBS News (12/19/14)

The influenza season has picked up in the United States, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reporting widespread disease activity in 29 states, especially in the South and Midwest. Most patients who have been hospitalized are either very young or very old, and 11 children have died so far this year. Some schools in Ohio, Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina were forced to close. According to health experts, part of the problem is that the vaccine developed for this flu season does not protect from H3N2, a strain that is currently circulating. The vaccine does protect against H1N1 and one or two strains of influenza B. The CDC continues to recommend that people receive the flu vaccine, however, as it is still better than no protection.

Influenza Update

CDC Immunization Works Newsletter December 2014

Flu Update: As always, flu is unpredictable and every season is different, with different flu viruses spreading and causing illness. CDC held a telebriefing on December 4, 2014, to discuss the current flu season, noting that influenza A (H3N2) flu viruses are predominant so far. H3N2-predominant seasons are often associated with more hospitalizations and deaths, especially in young children and older people. CDC also highlighted laboratory information indicating that more than half of analyzed H3N2 viruses this season are different from the H3N2 vaccine virus, a factor which may reduce how well the vaccine protects against those drifted H3N2 viruses. Despite the detection of drifted viruses, CDC continues to recommend flu vaccination as the best way to prevent the flu. Specifically, CDC recommends:

- Vaccination may provide partial protection against drifted H3N2 viruses and will protect against non-drifted circulating vaccine viruses this season, including influenza B viruses.
- Antiviral medications are an important second line of defense against the flu. Treatment with antiviral drugs is especially important for people at high risk of serious flu complications or people who are very sick with flu. It's especially important to get antiviral medicines quickly, since they work best when started within two days of the beginning of flu symptoms.

Take everyday actions like covering your cough, staying away from sick people, and washing your hands often. If you get the flu, stay home from work or school. If you are sick, stay away from other people to avoid spreading the flu.

More information is available in the [December 4 press release](#), the [transcript](#), and the CDC Health Alert Network, Health Advisory, regarding the [Potential for Circulation of Drifted Influenza A \(H3N2\) Viruses](#).

With 15 Children Dead, CDC Declares Flu Epidemic

ABC News (12/30/14) Neporent, Liz

With high rates of influenza-like illness in 22 states, up from 13 last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has declared a flu epidemic. Influenza-related hospitalizations are increasing, especially among senior citizens and young children, and 15 children have died from complications of the flu already this season. In Tennessee, one hospital has recorded 442 cases of pediatric flu in December alone, and at least six children in the state have died from the flu. The CDC says the vast majority of the cases reported this year have been the H3N2 subtype. The hardest-hit areas are in the south, Midwest, and western parts of the United States, but it is not clear why. Although this year's vaccine does not seem to be a perfect match with the circulating strains, health officials still recommend getting vaccinated against the flu, particularly for individuals in high-risk groups, noting that there could be some cross-protection.

Kids Who Were Preemies More Vulnerable to Flu Complications: Study Current guidelines don't identify them as a high-risk group, but they should, researchers say

WEDNESDAY, Dec. 3, 2014 (HealthDay News) -- Children who were born prematurely are twice as likely to develop pneumonia and other flu-related complications, so they should be first in line for flu shots every year, researchers suggest.

However, current U.S., U.K. and World Health Organization guidelines do not identify these kids as a high-risk group for flu complications, the study authors noted. In their analysis, the researchers reviewed data from 27 studies that included more than 14,000 children. The finding about children who were born prematurely is new, according to the report published in the Dec. 3 issue of *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*.

"Considering that around 10 percent [12.9 million] of the world's babies are born prematurely [before 37 weeks gestation] -- with preterm delivery rates of around 6 percent in Europe, 11 percent in North America and 12 percent in Africa -- it's a significant public health issue and has major implications for policy makers," study author Dr. Kay Wang, from the University of Oxford, said in a journal news release.

The researchers also confirmed U.S., U.K. and WHO guidelines that state children with neurological disorders, weakened immune systems and diabetes are at increased risk for flu-related complications.

Youngsters with sickle cell disease and those younger than 2 are also at greater risk but are not deemed to be so under current British guidelines, the study authors added.

They also found that obese children and those with respiratory disorders are not at higher risk, even though the U.S., U.K. and WHO guidelines state that they are.

Another important finding is that having a number of medical conditions increases a child's risk of being hospitalized with flu-related complications. Hospitalization rates were 74 percent for children with more than one medical condition, compared with 48 percent for those with one condition.

"Policy makers need to be aware of which groups of children should be prioritized when delivering interventions [e.g., flu vaccination and antiviral drugs] to prevent influenza and influenza-related complications, particularly during influenza epidemics and pandemics," Wang concluded.

More information

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [children and the flu](#).

SOURCE: *The Lancet Respiratory Medicine*, news release, Dec. 3, 2014

Pertussis Epidemic — California, 2014

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (12/05/14) Vol. 63, No. 48, P. 1129 Winter, Kathleen; Glaser, Carol; Watt, James; et al.

Due to the limitations in the currently available acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap), the United States may see a higher incidence of pertussis during the disease's normal cycle. In June, the California Department of Public Health declared that the state was experiencing an epidemic of pertussis, which tends to peak every three to five years. The 9,935 reported cases in California for this year are the most reported in the state in nearly 70 years. Despite its limitations, the Tdap vaccine continues to have an important impact on pertussis. In California, all prenatal care providers are encouraged to provide Tdap to pregnant women during each pregnancy, ideally at 27–36 weeks' gestation, based on recommendations by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. Infants under one year are at greatest risk for hospitalization and death from pertussis, so public-health experts are most focused on preventing disease in this age group. Recent data indicate that Tdap vaccination coverage among pregnant women was only 19.5 percent for California in 2012. In the third quarter of 2014, an estimated 84 percent of pregnant women had received Tdap vaccine in their third trimester.



Better Worry About Shingles. It Hurts. And Vaccination May Help.

Washington Post (12/08/14) Ianzito, Christina

Around 1 million Americans are affected by shingles every year, reports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Caused by the varicella zoster virus, which first appears as chickenpox, the virus remains dormant in the body's nervous system and emerges without warning, resulting in severe pain and a cluster of blisters. The shingles vaccine, recommended by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for people age 60 and older, can reduce the chances that shingles will emerge, and treatment within 48 to 72 hours of symptoms can lessen its severity. Around half of shingles cases occur in people ages 60 and older, and about a third of these individuals are affected by post-herpetic neuralgia (PHN), resulting in pain or numbness lasting months or even years. A clinical trial found that the Zostavax vaccine in this group lowered the risk of shingles by about 50 percent and the risk of PHN by 67 percent. Some insurers do not cover the vaccine for people under 60, and although the CDC does not have a recommendation for routine use of the vaccine among people in their 50s, they could discuss whether or not to be vaccinated with their doctors, says CDC epidemiologist Adriana Lopez. The CDC recommends vaccination for people who have already had shingles, to reduce the risk of recurrence.



FDA approves 9-valent HPV vaccine

December 11, 2014 · www.aapnews.org

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a new vaccine that can prevent diseases caused by nine types of human papillomavirus (HPV). Gardasil 9 (human papillomavirus 9-valent vaccine, recombinant) covers five more HPV types than predecessor Gardasil, both manufactured by Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp., subsidiary of Merck & Co.

Gardasil 9 — approved for females ages 9 through 26 and males ages 9 through 15 — can prevent cervical, vulvar, vaginal and anal cancers caused by HPV types 16, 18, 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58, and genital warts caused by HPV types 6 or 11. It adds protection against five additional HPV types — 31, 33, 45, 52 and 58 — which cause about 20% of cervical cancers and are not covered by previously FDA-approved HPV vaccines. The bivalent HPV vaccine Cervarix (GlaxoSmithKline) protects against HPV types 16 and 18. Gardasil 9 is administered as three separate injections. After the initial injection, the second and third dose follow two and six months later. The safety of Gardasil 9 was evaluated in 13,000 males and females, with the most common adverse reactions being injection site pain, swelling, redness and headache, according to the FDA.

A randomized, controlled clinical study was conducted in the United States and internationally in about 14,000 females ages 16 through 26 who tested negative for vaccine HPV types at the start of the study. Participants received either Gardasil or Gardasil 9. Gardasil 9 was found to be 97% effective in preventing cervical, vulvar and vaginal cancers caused by the five additional HPV types (31, 33, 45, 52 and 58). In addition, Gardasil 9 was found to be as effective as Gardasil for the prevention of diseases caused by the four shared HPV types (6, 11, 16 and 18) based on similar antibody responses in participants in clinical studies.

Recommendations for use of the vaccine will be considered at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices meeting Feb. 25-26. AAP policy consideration generally follows.

Meanwhile, the quadrivalent and bivalent vaccines will remain on the market and should continue to be used, according to the AAP Committee on Infectious Diseases. Both vaccines protect against types 16 and 18, which cause 70% of cervical and oropharyngeal cancers.

For practice tools and resources, visit www.cdc.gov/vaccines/youarethekey.

The Mumps, a Scourge of Dormitories, Spreads Through the N.H.L.

New York Times (12/16/14) P. B11 Klein, Jeff Z.

The number of National Hockey League players with confirmed or suspected cases of the mumps has risen to about 20. The outbreak is thought to have begun in October, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says it is similar in scope to other recent outbreaks. CDC epidemiologist Amy Parker Fiebelkorn says the outbreak would be much larger if many players were not up-to-date on their vaccinations. The Pittsburgh Penguins says Sidney Crosby contracted mumps despite having received a booster shot in February and again two weeks ago, and recent tests indicate that he was not susceptible to the virus. However, Fiebelkorn says, "The mumps component of the MMR vaccine is pretty effective. Generally, we say that one dose is about 80 percent effective, and two doses is about 90 percent effective. ... There is some margin for fully vaccinated individuals to still be infected with mumps if they're exposed to the virus." The CDC reported 1,078 mumps cases from Jan. 1 to Nov. 29, compared with 6,500 in 2006 and about 186,000 per year before vaccinations became widespread in 1967.

Question of the Week

IAC Express Issue 1158: December 16, 2014

My patient is a 14-year-old girl who has received one dose of bivalent HPV vaccine (HPV2, Cervarix, GlaxoSmithKline) and now wants to change over to quadrivalent HPV vaccine (HPV4, Gardasil, Merck). What is the recommendation to be followed?

Answer: You can complete the series with HPV4 (two more doses), which will assure protection against HPV types 16 and 18 (those types most likely to cause cervical and other cancers and that are in both HPV2 and HPV4). However, receiving only two doses of HPV4 may provide less protection against genital warts than the usual 3 doses. More information is available at www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr6305.pdf.

Question of the Week

IAC Express Issue 1160: December 23, 2014

We offer the quadrivalent inactivated influenza vaccine in our office. Will it protect our patients against the drifted H3N2 influenza virus?

Answer: The additional strain in the quadrivalent formulations of the inactivated influenza vaccine is an influenza-B strain. The drifted H3N2 viruses aren't precisely matched in influenza vaccines distributed in the United States. However, antibodies made in response to vaccination with one influenza virus may provide some protection against different but related viruses. A less than optimal match may result in reduced vaccine effectiveness but it can still provide some protection against influenza illness. In addition, even when there is a less than optimal match or lower effectiveness against one virus, it is important to remember that influenza vaccine contains three or four influenza virus strains, depending on the vaccine. There are presently B influenza viruses circulating, as well as the A/H3N2 viruses. For these reasons, even during seasons when there is a less than optimal match, CDC continues to recommend vaccination. This is particularly important for people at high risk for serious complications and their close contacts.