

PROTECT YOUR PATIENTS AGAINST INFLUENZA

Please consider offering influenza (flu) immunizations in your practice or facility. Despite the fact that flu immunization is the most effective way to protect patients from flu and its serious complications, too many clinicians including those serving medically fragile populations, do not make this preventive intervention available to their clients. Note that increasingly, health organizations, insurers, and health agencies are using a provider's influenza immunization rate as a performance indicator to assess quality and the level of adult preventive health services. Also note that reimbursement rates for vaccine purchase as well as for vaccine administration have increased significantly over past years. Please consult with the health plans, independent practice associations (IPAs), and insurers that you contract with to maximize your reimbursement rates.

Now is the time to order your vaccine for the fall. Sometimes, health care providers who wish to make flu immunizations available to their patients do not order vaccine early enough to ensure that they will have it at the start of the flu vaccination season. Flu vaccine is usually ordered directly from the manufacturer or a distributor. Ordering information can be found at www.preventinfluenza.org/professionals.asp.

Finally, this is a great time to start planning ahead for your 2009-2010 flu vaccination promotional and educational efforts. Consider developing a flu vaccination reminder/ recall system, providing educational materials to patients and staff, providing staff vaccinations, scheduling weekend or after-hours walk-in vaccination clinics, and/or implementing flu vaccination pre-printed or standing orders.

Resources to support your efforts can be found on the following websites:

- California Department of Public Health Immunization Branch
www.getimmunizedca.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/flu
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Immunization Program:
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip
- National Influenza Vaccine Summit: www.preventinfluenza.org

