Health Update: September 15

COVID-19 Updated Vaccine:

On Tuesday, September 11th, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved and authorized of the emergency use of updated COVID-19 formulated to more closely target currently circulating variants and to provide better protection. These vaccines have been updated to include a component that corresponds to the Omicron variant XBB.1.5. As a result, the **bivalent** Moderna and Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines are no longer authorized for use in the United States.

On Wednesday, September 12th, the FDA approved and authorized the 2023-2024 monovalent COVID-19 vaccine for all individuals 6 months of age and older. The CDC Director also signed off on the recommendation. To read the office CDC press release on the recommendation for the updated COVID-19 vaccines for the Fall//Winter season, click here.

2023 – 2024 (monovalent, XBB containing) mRNA COVID-19 vaccine recommendations:

- Everyone ages 5 years and older is recommended to receive 1 dose of a 2023–2024 mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.
- Children ages 6 months–4 years should complete a multi-dose initial series (2 doses of Moderna or 3 doses of Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA COVID-19 vaccine) with at least one dose of the 2023–2024 COVID-19 vaccine.
- People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised should complete a 3- dose initial series with at least one dose of the 2023–2024 COVID-19 vaccine and may receive 1 or more additional 2023–2024 COVID-19 vaccine doses.

Flu Vaccine:

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) recommends annual influenza vaccination for everyone 6 months and older.

For people 65 years and older, three flu vaccines are preferentially recommended: Fluzone High-Dose Quadrivalent vaccine, Flublok Quadrivalent recombinant flu vaccine and Fluad Quadrivalent adjuvanted flu vaccine. This recommendation was based on a review of available studies which suggests that, in this age group, these vaccines are potentially more effective than standard dose unadjuvanted flu vaccines. The recommendation for these vaccines is important because people 65 years and older are at increased risk of developing serious complications from flu compared with young, healthy adults. This is partly because human immune defenses become weaker with increasing age. During most seasons, people 65 years and older account for the majority of flu hospitalizations and deaths. In the United States, between about 70 percent and 85 percent of seasonal flu-related deaths and between 50 percent and 70 percent of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations have occurred among people 65 years and older. If you have specific questions, please contact your health care provider.

For more information, click here for the summary of flu vaccine recommendations.