



To: Emergency Medical Alert Network (EMAN) Participants
Date: November 3, 2006

Temporary Exemption to Mercury Law for Pediatric Influenza Vaccine

Effective July 1, 2006, California law provides that vaccines containing specific levels of mercury cannot be administered to pregnant women and young children, except under certain circumstances. Due to a shipment delay, there is temporarily an insufficient supply of mercury-free pediatric influenza vaccine throughout the State of California.

The Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency has therefore issued an exemption to the law for the six-week period of November 2 – December 14, 2006. This temporary exemption will allow local healthcare professionals to provide influenza vaccine for children between 6 – 35 months of age, beginning the two-dose series with available vaccine and completing the series with mercury-free vaccine.

Health care providers are encouraged to first use any available mercury-free vaccine during the exemption period. However, this short-term alternative for parents and health care providers will help ensure that young children are protected from the potentially severe effects of influenza. During the 2004 flu season, more than 150 children in the United States died from influenza, and many more were hospitalized as a result of influenza-related complications.

The exemption was requested by the California District of the American Academy of Pediatrics, California Medical Association, California Academy of Family Physicians, and Kaiser Permanente. A letter to California Physicians and the State Press Release on this topic are provided on EMAN under the “News Section”.

This exemption does not apply to vaccine for pregnant women. For additional information, please contact the California Department of Health Services Immunization Branch at (510) 620-3737 or at www.getimmunizedca.org.

Thank you for your continued participation.

Emergency Medical Alert Network (EMAN)
County of San Diego, Health & Human Services Agency
Community Epidemiology Branch