February 16, 2022

The MMS will continue to monitor developments related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the response by state and federal agencies. For current information, including updates from NEJM, visit the dedicated page on the MMS website: massmed.org/covid-19.

Public Health

Mass. DPH updates mask guidance for fully vaccinated individuals

In light of recent positive progress on COVID-19 indicators and the Commonwealth’s high vaccine acceptance rate, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) now advises that individuals who are fully vaccinated should wear a mask when indoors (not in their own home) if they have a weakened immune system, or if they are at increased risk for severe disease because of age or an underlying medical condition, or if someone in the household has a weakened immune system, is at increased risk for severe disease or is unvaccinated. Multiple conditions may put someone at higher risk for severe disease; information on those conditions can be found here.

DPH also issued the following reminders:
• Vaccination remains the most effective protection. All eligible residents are urged to get vaccinated and stay up to date on COVID vaccinations, including booster doses.
• Individuals who are not fully vaccinated, should continue to wear a face covering or mask to help prevent you from spreading COVID-19 to other people.
• Individuals who are considered close contacts or who have tested positive must follow the isolation and quarantine guidance, which includes wearing a mask in public for 5 more days after they leave isolation or quarantine on day 5, regardless of vaccination status.
• All people in Massachusetts (regardless of vaccination status) are required to continue wearing face coverings in certain settings, including on public transportation and in health care facilities. See www.mass.gov/maskrules for a complete list.

Massachusetts Medical Society on moving forward as COVID-19 metrics improve

The Massachusetts Medical Society on Tuesday, February 15 released a statement outlining its thoughts on the current state of COVID-19 and the importance of beginning conversations about a thoughtful approach to moving forward. Read the statement here.

The statement, attributed to Carole E. Allen MD, MBA, FAAP, president of the Medical Society, was referenced in recent Boston Globe coverage of the state's decision to loosen recommendations for indoor mask use. Read the article here.

COVID-19 Therapeutic Locator and Look Up Tool

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) has two online tools to assist providers in locating monoclonal antibodies or oral antivirals. The COVID-19 Therapeutic Locator allows providers to enter an address and search for health care facilities, state-sponsored sites (Gothams) and select Walgreens Pharmacies nearby who
have supply of monoclonal antibodies and/or oral antivirals and are accepting referrals for therapy.

The COVID-19 Therapeutic Look Up Tool is a listing of locations that shows the available supply of sotrovimab, Paxlovid and molnupiravir at each location. Providers can search for "Facilities with reported supply" to find facilities that have a reported therapeutic supply on hand. Online referral links and contact information are provided. As a reminder, prescriptions are needed for Paxlovid and molnupiravir.

Please visit information for providers about therapeutic treatments for COVID-19 for the latest DPH guidance on COVID-19 therapeutics.

COVID-19 vaccine for the 6 months through 4-year-old population delayed

On Friday February 11, Pfizer-BioNTech said it is postponing its rolling application to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to expand the use of its two-dose COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 6 months to 4 years. The move means that vaccines for this age group will not be available in the coming weeks. Pfizer said that it will wait for its data on a three-dose series of the vaccine, because it believes three doses "may provide a higher level of protection in this age group." Data on the third dose is expected in early April.

Practice Management

FDA authorizes new monoclonal antibody treatment that retains activity against Omicron variant

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) for a new monoclonal antibody for the treatment of COVID-19 that retains activity against the omicron variant. The EUA for bebtelovimab is for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 in adults and pediatric patients (12 years of age and older weighing at least 40 kilograms, which is about 88 pounds) with a positive COVID-19
test, and who are at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death, and for whom alternative COVID-19 treatment options approved or authorized by the FDA are not accessible or clinically appropriate.

To read more, click here.

CDC updates interim clinical considerations for use of COVID-19 vaccine

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated its Interim Clinical Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Vaccines Currently Approved or Authorized in the United States. Key updates include:

- Updated guidance for moderately or severely immunocompromised people
- Clarification of existing recommendation to receive a 3-dose mRNA vaccine primary series followed by a booster dose for a total of 4 doses
- New guidance to shorten the interval between completion of the mRNA vaccine primary series and the booster dose to at least 3 months (instead of 5 months)
- New guidance for those who received the Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine primary series to receive an additional dose and a booster dose, for a total of 3 doses to be up to date
- Updated guidance that it is no longer necessary to delay COVID-19 vaccination following receipt of monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma
- Updated guidance on receiving a booster dose if vaccinated outside the United States

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