Safe and Efficient Flu Vaccination Administration
How Prefilled Syringes Can Help

With a universal recommendation for flu immunization, many healthcare provider organizations have established influenza vaccination programs and view them as centerpieces of their commitment to preventive services. As these programs grow and adapt to changing immunization requirements, the choice of vaccine packaging is more and more a core consideration for ensuring safety and efficiency in these important public health programs.

**Risk in the Vaccination Process: It’s Real**

Unfortunately, even experienced vaccination sites remain subject to human error that can cause healthcare-associated infections or medication mix-ups. For example:

Nurses and physician still occasionally misuse or reuse vials, syringes, or needles in ways that increase the risk of blood-borne disease transmission.\(^2,3\) Too often, syringes pre-drawn from vaccine vials are left unlabeled, thereby increasing the risk of wrong or improperly labeled or stored vaccine being given. Dosing errors increase when vaccine is prepared and labeled by hand.\(^4\)

Avoiding injection-related risks depends on consistently flawless technique in all the manual steps of vaccine preparation and administration. But these same steps, so crucial for safety, can also slow patient through-put and add costs to a program.

**Why are Vaccination Programs Shifting to Prefilled Vaccines?**

In recent years, more vaccination programs have shifted to vaccines supplied in prefilled syringes to make their vaccination process safer and more streamlined. Using vaccines in prefilled syringes ensures the least possible chance of error while offering improved efficiency.

In fact, most physicians and nurses say they prefer prefilled syringes over vials\(^5\) and a growing share—now greater than one-third—of all vaccinations in the U.S. are given with prefilled syringes.\(^6\)

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In alignment with healthcare guidelines and best practices—such as those issued by the CDC and The Joint Commission—increasing numbers of clinics are now choosing the prefilled vaccine format because of the hard-wired safety advantages and the proven efficiencies.

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Improved Safety: It’s Built In

Training and monitoring for safe vaccination technique will always be needed. But injection safety authorities also now recommend using devices that incorporate safety-by-design principles.

Prefilled single-use syringes embody such safety-by-design principles by being inherently simple to use. They eliminate the need for several of the manual steps known to open the door to avoidable healthcare-associated infections. Eliminating these extra steps required to prepare and administer a vaccine from a vial may result in:

• Reduced opportunity for syringe reuse
• Reduced cross-contamination

In addition, because prefilled vaccines are pre-labeled and pre-measured, the risk that a patient will receive the wrong injectable medication or an inaccurate dose is reduced. Clearly printed peel-off labels on the prefilled vaccine syringe also make it easier to document the patient’s immunization record.

Increased Efficiency: It’s Measurable

The simplicity of the prefilled vaccine translates into faster and smoother clinic workflow. On average, a nurse needs about 37 seconds (and 6 steps) less to prepare a vaccine using a multi-dose vial.

Excluding vaccine acquisition cost, clinics can save $110 per one hundred doses with prefilled syringes due to reduced nursing time and less ancillary products vs. a vial preparation.

Other cost savings related to prefilled syringes may accrue due to:

• Reduced loss/waste of vaccine due to predrawn syringes being out of date, contaminated, or inadequately labeled
• Reduced time for paperwork due to pre-printed labeling

For built-in safety and measurable efficiency, healthcare providers still using single or multi-dose vials are urged to consider the advantages of prefilled vaccines.

For more information on safe injection practices, see the One & Only Campaign at www.oneandonlycampaign.org and the following sources cited in this fact sheet:

1 “CDC’s Committee Recommends Universal Annual Influenza Vaccination” CDC, February 24, 2010.
3. CDC. Injection Safety website: Information for Providers. May 2010;
5. BD Pharmaceutical Systems, data on file;
7. Joint Commission: Standards for BoosterPak for MM.03.01.01; 2009;
9. OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard (1910.1030);
10. Dr. David Bishai, Johns Hopkins University, Bloomberg School of Public Health, findings presented at the 2010 World Vaccine Congress in Washington, D.C.;

Your Distributor Can Help You!

Distributors carry many of the vaccines used in prefilled syringes and can help incorporate these supplies in future orders/shipments. For reprints visit www.HIDA.org or call 703-549-4432.