

H1N1 and Seasonal Influenza Impact in Maryland Updated: 12.08.2009

Type A (H1N1) 2009 is capable of causing severe disease and death especially among people with underlying health problems that are associated with a high risk of influenza complications. Novel H1N1 affects young people disproportionately with few cases among the elderly. H1N1 activity level in Maryland is considered “widespread.” There have been 940 hospitalizations and 35 deaths among Maryland residents associated with H1N1; 71% of the deaths were due to underlying health conditions. H1N1 continues to be the predominant influenza strain currently circulating, while seasonal flu peaks in January or February and can occur as late as May.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported 31,320 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations and 1,336 deaths from August 30 – November 28, 2009. The infectious period for a confirmed case of influenza A (H1N1) infection is defined as 1 day prior to the case’s illness onset to 7 days after onset. During the week of November 22-28, 2009, influenza activity decreased across all key indicators over the previous week, but most indicators remain higher than normal for this time of year. The CDC urges clinicians, particularly those in primary care (including internists, pediatricians, family practitioners, OB-GYN physicians) and hospital-based care (emergency room, hospitalists, intensivists) to emphasize early, empiric antiviral treatment for hospitalized patients and high-risk outpatients with suspected, probable, or confirmed novel swine-origin influenza A (H1N1) virus infection.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that more than 207 countries and overseas territories or communities have reported laboratory confirmed cases of pandemic influenza H1N1 2009, including at least 8,768 deaths as of November 29, 2009. Many countries have stopped counting individual cases resulting in a lower than actual case count.

Vaccines are the best tool to prevent influenza. Maryland state officials ordered more than 1.2 million doses of H1N1 vaccine. Healthcare providers are advised to pre-register for H1N1 vaccine at the Maryland DHMH website: <http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/swineflu/h1n1registration.html>. According to DHMH, health care providers who primarily serve members of the target populations have been shipped the bulk of their vaccine request. The five target populations for H1N1 vaccination include:

- Pregnant women
- Parents, household contacts and caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
- All people from 6 months through 24 years of age
- Persons aged 25 - 64 years with health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza

Maryland is expanding the distribution of H1N1 flu vaccine to the general population as vaccine shipments continue to increase and demand declines. Local health departments have reported sufficient supplies of vaccine to complete the planned school-based vaccination campaigns. The seasonal flu vaccine is unlikely to provide protection against novel H1N1 influenza and vice versa. Seasonal flu vaccination is recommended for individuals who are either at high risk of having serious seasonal flu-related complications or people who live with or care for those at high risk for serious seasonal flu-related complications, including pregnant women, children, and individuals 50 years of age and older.

DHMH is asking Marylanders to participate in the Maryland Resident Influenza Tracking Survey (MRITS), a system designed to measure influenza-like illness (ILI) based on illness reported directly by residents each week. Residents can sign up at <http://flusurvey.dhmh.md.gov/> to help track influenza activity.

Information and guidelines can be found at: <http://www.healthymaryland.org>

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Resources: <http://www.dhmh.state.md.us/swineflu/index.html>

CDC Influenza Resources: <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/update.htm> and <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>

World Health Organization H1N1 Surveillance and General Information: <http://www.who.int/csr/don/en/>

Local Maryland Flu Resources:

http://apps.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/local/maryland/list_location.cfm?areaid=4&service_id=299&service_type=topic&invoke_dby=services