

# Garrett County Health Department

1025 Memorial Drive

Oakland, MD 21550

Phone (301) 334-7730

FAX (301) 334-7701

## News Release

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**Contact Person:** Diane Lee, PIO, 301-334-7730

The H1N1 influenza continues to make its way across the state, with confirmed cases in Allegany and Washington counties, but none in Garrett County.

Tuesday Maryland health officials announced the state's first confirmed H1N1 flu related death. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene reported that H1N1 flu was a contributing factor in the death of an elderly Baltimore-area resident who also had serious underlying medical conditions.

Confirmed and probable cases reported on Friday, June 19, show 334 in Maryland, 31,449 in the United States, and 44,287 internationally.

“We continue working with the hospital and local physicians and are maintaining increased surveillance to detect possible H1N1 flu cases in Garrett County,” said Health Officer Rodney Glotfelty. “An H1N1 work group continues to meet weekly to monitor the situation and develop a plan of action as the flu spreads.”

Although the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the pandemic alert to its highest level two weeks ago, its decision was a reflection of the spread of the virus, not the severity of illness caused by the virus. "At this early stage, the pandemic can be characterized globally as being moderate in severity," WHO's statement read. The agency stressed that most cases are mild and require no treatment.

What makes the H1N1 strain different from the typical seasonal flu is that about half of the people killed worldwide were young and previously healthy, while seasonal flu is typically most deadly to the very young and the elderly.

H1N1 flu is also continuing to spread during the start of summer in the northern hemisphere. Normally, flu viruses disappear with warm weather, but this flu is proving to be resilient.

Persons who develop influenza-like-illness (fever with either cough or sore throat) are encouraged to stay home 7 days after illness begins, or until 24 hours after this symptoms resolve. If you are sick with influenza like symptoms avoid public gatherings. People with underlying medical conditions who develop flu like symptoms should call their

doctor. Doctors may prescribe antiviral drugs to treat those who become severely ill.

Scientists are at work on a vaccine that would protect against the H1N1 flu strain, something human immune systems are susceptible to because it has not been seen before.

To avoid getting or spreading illness, everyone should:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with a flu-like illness, stay home for 7 days after your symptoms begin or until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours, whichever is longer. Keep away from other household members as much as possible. This is to keep you from infecting others and spreading the virus further.