



STATE OF MARYLAND

# DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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## **Maryland Reports First H1N1 Flu-related Death**

### **Flu considered a contributing factor in death of elderly resident**

**Baltimore, MD (June 23, 2009)** - An elderly Baltimore metro area resident with serious underlying medical conditions and a novel H1N1 influenza virus infection has died, according to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). Among other complications, H1N1 flu was a contributing factor, making this Maryland's first death confirmed to be associated with the novel flu strain. Personal details about the case, including specific underlying health conditions, will not be released to protect the privacy of the resident and the resident's family.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports 87 people nationwide have died after contracting novel H1N1 influenza. In the Mid-Atlantic region, Virginia has reported one H1N1 flu-related death and Pennsylvania has reported three.

“It is with great sadness and sympathy for the family and loved ones that we must report the first Maryland death in which the H1N1 flu was a contributing factor,” said John M. Colmers, DHMH Secretary. “While hundreds of Marylanders have recovered from this relatively mild form of novel flu, this death illustrates how serious influenza can be, especially for persons with serious underlying health conditions.”

Nationwide, CDC reports more than 21,000 confirmed and probable cases of H1N1 influenza. To date, 370 cases of novel H1N1 have been confirmed in Maryland. That figure is likely a fraction of the total H1N1 flu cases statewide. Many people who become ill with flu-like symptoms are not tested and recover within a week's time, much like seasonal flu.

“As with seasonal flu, deaths related to H1N1 are not unexpected. Unfortunately, we will probably see more deaths in Maryland this year,” said Frances Phillips, DHMH Deputy Secretary for Public Health. “We have novel H1N1 flu throughout Maryland and it is likely in every jurisdiction. Anyone with underlying health conditions which put them at risk for complications of flu should consult with their health care provider if they develop flu symptoms.”

Symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, and sore throat. Additional symptoms may include chills, headache, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea or shortness of breath.

Based on CDC figures, it is estimated that 1,000 Marylanders die every year from seasonal flu or its complications. Complications and death are more common among those with serious underlying health conditions.

According to the CDC, people at a higher risk of serious health consequences from the H1N1 flu virus are the same as those with seasonal flu:

- Children less than 5 years old
- Persons aged 65 years or older
- Pregnant women
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities
- Adults and children who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular, or metabolic disorders
- Adults and children who have immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by HIV)
- Children and adolescents (less than 18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and who might be at risk for experiencing Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection

As with seasonal flu, the best protection from contracting or spreading the novel H1N1 flu virus is to practice good personal hygiene:

- Wash your hands often, especially after coughing, sneezing, and wiping or blowing the nose
- If you have flu symptoms, stay home and avoid contact with other people to protect them from catching your illness.
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing
- Use paper tissues when wiping or blowing your nose; throw tissues away after use
- Stay away from crowded living and sleeping spaces, if possible

#### *Additional Information*

Maryland DHMH H1N1 Influenza information:

<http://www.dhmh.md.gov/swineflu/index.html>

The Weekly CDC Novel H1N1 Flu Situation Update:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/update.htm>

CDC Interim Patient Treatment and Risk Guidance:

<http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/identifyingpatients.htm>

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