

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 “sporadic.” According to DHMH, as of March 3, 2010 there have been 1060 hospitalizations and 44 deaths among Maryland residents associated with H1N1; 81% of the deaths involved 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. A third wave of the illness is “very possible,” explained DHMH Deputy Secretary of Public Health Services, Frances Philips.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported 40,805 laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations and 2,009 deaths from August 30, 2009 – February 27, 2010. 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 February 21-27, the proportion of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I) was below the epidemic threshold. 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 213 countries and overseas territories or communities have reported laboratory confirmed cases of pandemic influenza H1N1 2009, including at least 16,455 deaths as of March 5, 2010. 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.dhmv.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

Because supplies of the 2009 H1N1 vaccines have increased dramatically, CDC is now encouraging everyone who has been waiting to get vaccinated at this time. 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.dhmv.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.dhmv.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](http://apps.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/local/maryland/list_location.cfm?areaid=4&service_id=299&service_type=topic&invoke_dby=services)