



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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Governor Martin O'Malley Announces H1N1 (Swine) Flu Vaccine Available and Recommended for all Marylanders

Target populations remain a public health focus as vaccine becomes available to all

Baltimore, MD (December 8, 2009) Governor Martin O'Malley announced today that Maryland will expand the distribution of H1N1 (Swine) flu vaccine to the general population, adding healthy adults and seniors to the five target groups for whom the vaccine is currently recommended. Those target groups will remain a statewide priority as the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) reports a decline in flu activity following a late October second wave peak in H1N1 (Swine) flu.

“We have a window of opportunity that allows us to get this vaccine to every member of every family, providing greater protection against this flu for all Marylanders,” said Governor Martin O'Malley. “Getting more vaccine into the general population may help Maryland avoid a third wave of H1N1 (Swine) flu activity, protecting our most vulnerable neighbors from serious health problems, hospitalization and death.”

According to DHMH, Maryland's “window of opportunity” is due to three factors:

- Maryland is seeing a general decline in H1N1 (Swine) Flu activity, even though many Marylanders continue to get sick and the H1N1 (Swine) flu continues to spread.
- Vaccine shipments continue to increase every week as DHMH orders 100% of the vaccine manufactured and made available by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- With well over one million doses of vaccine delivered to Maryland's five target populations, demand for vaccination appears to be on the decline.

“Vaccine remains the best protection against flu and Maryland is far from finished with this pandemic,” said John M. Colmers, DHMH Secretary. “Although H1N1 (Swine) flu is generally a mild to moderate illness, some Marylanders continue to experience serious symptoms, some still require hospitalization and unfortunately we will continue to see some die from complications.”

“We will continue to emphasize the five target populations who are at higher risk of complications because they should get vaccinated,” said Fran Phillips, Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services. “Opening up this vaccine to the general population means we will soon be shipping to local pharmacies making it even more convenient for Marylanders in the target groups to get vaccinated.”

According to DHMH, health care providers who primarily serve members of the target populations have been shipped the bulk of their vaccine requests. Maryland’s Local Health Departments have advised DHMH that sufficient supplies of vaccine are available to complete the planned school-based vaccination campaigns.

The five target populations include:

- Pregnant Woman
- 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 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza

Starting today, Local Health Departments will be able to vaccinate anyone who seeks it with a focus on reaching members of the five target groups. That is the approach of the Baltimore County Department of Health as it begins a massive two-day vaccination clinic at the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium today, according to Health Officer, Dr. Gregory Wm. Branch. “As we embark on this holiday season, it is critical that we prevent the spread of H1N1; therefore, I think it is prudent and timely for us to initiate vaccinating the general population, to ensure that everyone has a healthy holiday.”

Should the CDC’s daily vaccine allocations to Maryland continue in sufficient amounts, there could be enough vaccine by the holidays so that anyone who wishes to get vaccinated may be able to find it at a time and place that is convenient. That could include a doctor’s office, the local health department and several retail pharmacies beginning as early as next week.

Additional Information

Maryland DHMH H1N1 (Swine) flu and vaccine locator information:

www.flu.maryland.gov

Updated CDC Guidance:

<http://www.flu.gov/>

The Weekly CDC Novel H1N1 Flu Situation Update:

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

Regular updates are from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene are posted daily on Facebook at www.facebook.com/marylandfluresponse and on Twitter at @Marylandflu

