

CITY OF BALTIMORE

SHEILA DIXON, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Olivia D. Farrow, Esq., R.S.,  
Interim Commissioner  
1001 E. Fayette Street  
Baltimore, MD 21202

August 31, 2009

Dear Parents,

In preparing for the new school year, the Baltimore City Health Department has spent considerable time planning for outbreaks this fall of H1N1 influenza, or "swine flu," should they occur. Like seasonal flu, H1N1 influenza is a contagious disease and is spread from person to person through the air by coughing or sneezing, or by touching infected objects and then touching the nose or mouth. Typical flu symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches and chills.

The Health Department is working with the school system to monitor the incidence of seasonal influenza and the H1N1 virus in your child's school. So far, H1N1 flu continues to act much like a mild seasonal flu. Though some patients become seriously ill, most recover quickly and without complications. Even so, children who become sick with flu-like symptoms before and during the school year should not come to school until they have been symptom-free, without the benefit of medication, for at least 24 hours.

Having your child vaccinated against both seasonal influenza and the H1N1 virus is important for your child's health. You may obtain seasonal flu vaccine from your child's doctor or at free Health Department clinics. This year, the Health Department will offer seasonal flu vaccine at school to children ages 5 to 11. School-based vaccination clinics will begin this fall, and your child's school will provide clinic dates in a letter that will be sent home with your child. You will also receive information sheets about the vaccine, as well as a form that you must sign to accept or refuse vaccinations for your child. **Vaccines will not be given to your child without your written consent.** There is no cost to you.

The Health Department is committed to protecting all city residents against both seasonal and H1N1 flu. A vaccine for H1N1 influenza currently is being developed. We will be immunizing students against the H1N1 virus in schools and at health clinics. Private physicians also will provide H1N1 vaccinations.

Parents can help stop the spread of flu by reminding your children to use good hygiene practices, including proper hand washing techniques (washing with soap for 20 seconds) and cough etiquette (covering a cough or sneeze with a clean tissue), and keeping them home when they are sick.

More information and advice for parents is available at our website: [www.baltimorehealth.org/swineflu](http://www.baltimorehealth.org/swineflu). Parents can also call 3-1-1 – Baltimore City's service line – for information on free city flu clinics.

I wish all of you a productive, successful, and healthy school year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "O. Farrow", is written over a white background.

Olivia D. Farrow, Esq., R.S.  
Interim Commissioner of Health