

CITY OF BALTIMORE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Johns Hopkins Public Health Leaders Join Health Department for Release of Seasonal Influenza Plan

November 8, 2007-- The Baltimore City Health Department released a plan for addressing seasonal influenza today with support from experts in infection control at Johns Hopkins Hospital and the Dean of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Influenza is a contagious, viral illness affecting 5% to 20% of the U.S. population and causing an average of 226,000 hospitalizations and 36,000 deaths each year. Vaccination is the primary method of preventing transmission of influenza and its associated complications.

The Seasonal Flu Plan defines education messages and actions that the Health Department may employ depending on the severity of flu season in Baltimore. It defines three levels of flu in Baltimore:

- **Minimal flu.** At this stage, the key response is preparation for flu season, including vaccination.
- **Flu Alert.** This stage reflects flu season in Baltimore, with the enhanced need for vaccination, hand washing and other basic steps, including increased communication with the public and health care providers.
- **Severe Flu Warning.** This stage will only be reached if the healthcare system has difficulty responding to the burden of the flu.

The level of flu will be determined through biweekly surveillance conducted by the Health Department, in partnership with the State.

The Health Department advises that all Baltimore residents talk to their doctor about getting the flu vaccine this year.

“Prevention of the flu is our best line of defense, and now is the time to be vaccinated,” says Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner of Health. “This plan outlines Baltimore’s approach to managing the different stages of seasonal influenza.”

“I am pleased that our faculty and the Health Department have collaborated on this innovative approach to seasonal flu,” said Dr. Michael J. Klag, Dean of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. “Like the Health Department, we are committed to protecting the health of the people of Baltimore and we provide the data necessary for rational policy decisions.”

“While this is not a pandemic flu plan, its general approach foreshadows how the Health Department would inform the public and proceed in response to unusual flu challenges,” said Dr. Jonathan Links, Professor and Director of Center for Public Health Preparedness at the Bloomberg School of Public Health.

“This plan should help reduce the burden of flu this season,” said Dr. Trish Perl, Professor and Hospital Epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Baltimore residents should contact their doctors for more information on the flu vaccine, or go to www.flucliniclocator.org for a list of clinic sites. Free flu vaccine clinics will be available over the next few months, and more information can be obtained by calling 311 or logging on to www.baltimorehealth.org/flu.