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September 11, 2009

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH REPORTS DEATH ASSOCIATED WITH H1N1 VIRUS

(RICHMOND, Va.)— The Virginia Department of Health reported the death today of a child from the Western Tidewater Health District who was diagnosed with the novel influenza A (H1N1) virus.

Although the cause of death has not been confirmed, the novel H1N1 virus appears to have been a factor. The patient had an underlying health condition that put her at greater risk of complications from flu.

Nationwide, as of September 9, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported 593 deaths caused by the new virus.

“Our heartfelt condolences go out to the patient’s family at this time of loss,” said State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, M.D., MBA. “Losing a child is a tragedy for all of us.”

The Commissioner reminds all Virginians to be vigilant in guarding against the flu and its spread. Symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, sore throat, headache, body aches, chills or fatigue. Some people are at higher risk for complications from the novel H1N1 virus and are strongly encouraged to call their health care providers if they experience flu-like symptoms. These include pregnant women, persons between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, and people ages of 25 through 64 years of age with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, asthma, other lung diseases, heart disease, or a compromised immune system.

To date, this strain of influenza has predominantly affected younger people. Some scientific studies have shown that many people over the age of 64 appear to have at least partial immunity to this particular influenza strain, probably from exposure years ago to a similar flu virus. However, those over 64 who develop influenza-like illness and have underlying medical conditions should consider consulting with their physician.

People also are advised to protect their health against influenza and other infectious diseases by:

- Getting their seasonal influenza vaccination now and planning on getting their novel H1N1 vaccination later this fall. The novel H1N1 vaccine is anticipated to become available in mid-October.

- Staying home from work or school when ill and limiting their contact with others to keep from infecting them
- Calling their health care providers before seeking care for influenza-like illness so that the necessary infection control measures can be put in place
- Covering their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze and throwing the tissue in the trash after use
- Washing their hands often with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners also are effective.
- Limiting close contact with sick people
- Preventing the spread of germs by not touching their eyes, nose or mouth

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For more information on the novel Influenza A (H1N1) virus go online to the Virginia Department of Health at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov> or the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov>. Information is also available from the VDH Inquiry Center at PHIC@vdh.virginia.gov and toll free weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1-877-ASK-VDH3.