



# How to Report a Suspected Cancer Cluster

For the People and Communities of the State of Maryland

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**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE**

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# How to Report a Suspected Cancer Cluster

## *Concerned about Cancer in Your Community?*

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) responds to concerns about cancer in Maryland communities, and this document will provide the information and steps an individual should take in order to report it to the proper individuals.

### *Cancer Cluster Concerns*

Before taking any steps, it is important to become familiar with cancer clusters and how the state of Maryland handles investigations, in the event they are necessary. Please take time to review the document titled, *Questions and Answers: Cancer Causes and Clusters* located on the Maryland DHMH cancer cluster website <http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/cancer/SitePages/Cancer%20Clusters.aspx>.

### *Examples of Cancer Concerns from the Public*

Over the years, many people concerned about cancer have contacted MD DHMH; here is just a small example of concerns that DHMH has received:

- There seems to be a large number of people diagnosed with cancer in my neighborhood. Is this a cancer cluster?
- I (or my friend, coworker, or family member) was diagnosed with cancer and I am worried that something in my local community (or work place) may have caused it.
- I am worried that chemicals from an industrial site or facility in my neighborhood might be causing cancer.

If you have a concern about cancer in your environment follow the steps outlined below.

### *What Should I Do First?*

1. **Contact:** Begin by contacting your Local Health Department (LDH) by phone or email which can be found in the document titled *Local Health Department Contact Information for Maryland Residents* found on the Maryland DHMH Cancer Cluster website at <http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/cancer/SitePages/Cancer%20Clusters.aspx>. When you speak to your LHD representative, tell them you have a concern about a cancer cluster and would like to report it.
2. **Provide Known Information:** You should be prepared to provide your name, address, contact information (so you can be contacted for additional questions), and will be asked a series of questions which may include the following:
  - Where are the cancer cases located (street address and county)?
  - What types of cancers are they? (Examples: breast cancer, prostate cancer, Hodgkin's Lymphoma)
  - When and at what hospitals were the cancer cases diagnosed?

- How long has the person(s) with cancer lived at their current residential address?

It is okay if you are unable to answer every question, please provide as much information as you can. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and only used by relevant LHD and state health department staff to investigate if the cluster exists.

3. **Await Contact:** A representative from your LHD will contact you with an update about your cancer cluster concern in two (2) weeks or less.

### ***What Should I Not Do?***

Unless it is readily given to you, you should not actively collect health information from others because they may not wish to discuss their diagnosis with you. If you do receive information about others, the LHD will not contact anyone except for the person reporting the cluster if more information is required.

### ***What Are The Next Steps?***

You should expect that:

- Your concern will be prioritized and treated seriously, and any information you provide will be kept absolutely confidential.
- A representative from your LHD will respond to you within two (2) weeks of your initial contact to inform you about the progress of the inquiry into your concern.
- Your LHD will work with the Maryland state department to determine if answers can be obtained for your inquiry.

For more information, please contact your local health department.