



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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May 6, 2009

Dear Healthcare Professionals:

First, let me thank all of you for the extraordinary effort and cooperation you have given our public health community as we respond to the threat of the new human influenza virus of swine origin (H1N1). Our Washington State public health system is busy with 2 goals in mind; reducing transmission and illness severity and providing information to help health care professionals like you, public health officials and the public address the challenges posed by the new virus.

As state health officer, I am appealing to you as health care professionals to be good stewards of our antiviral medications.

Simply put, there is not an unlimited supply of antiviral medications like oseltamivir (TamiFlu[®]) and zanamivir (Relenza[®]). Building personal stockpiles uses antivirals that are then not available for people who are seriously ill with influenza due to swine flu or seasonal human flu viruses should a shortage occur. In addition, a limited supply threatens our ability to give prophylaxis to exposed people who are at high risk for severe complications and death due to influenza viruses (e.g., pregnant women). The use of these medications to treat persons with mild influenza without risk factors for severe complications may also reduce the supply for persons at risk for more severe disease.

CDC recommendations for antiviral treatment and prophylaxis of swine influenza, including dosing recommendations are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/guidance/>.

You control the supply of these antiviral drugs through your prescription-writing authority and behaviors. Although you all care deeply for our patients, I would like to encourage a high level of stewardship with regards to these potentially limited anti-influenza medications.

Sincerely,

Maxine Hayes, MD, MPH
State Health Officer

