



Purchasing Antiviral Medications for Pandemic Influenza

October 2008

Influenza pandemics are caused when a new strain of virus is passed widely from person to person. We cannot know how effective antiviral drugs will be against a new influenza virus until they are used to treat patients infected with the new virus, but they may provide an important life-saving treatment option.

The federal government makes antiviral drugs available to state and local governments in three ways: distribution from a federal stockpile at the time of a pandemic, state and local government purchase of limited amounts at a subsidized rate and state and local government purchase of additional amounts at standard government prices.

Currently, Washington has access to enough antiviral medication to treat about 21 percent of the state's population. This represents the amount purchased and stored by our state and local governments and the amount allocated to our state in the federal stockpile. The CDC recommends that each state have enough antivirals on hand to treat 25 percent of their population. Increasing Washington's supply of antivirals to the CDC recommended level would cost an estimated 4.6 million dollars.

Federal government antiviral drug supply programs

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provides the antiviral drugs Tamiflu (a tablet) and Relenza (an inhaled medicine) to local and state governments through these programs:

Strategic National Stockpile (SNS)

- HHS will supply antivirals and other medications from the SNS when a state requests them during a pandemic or other emergency.
- Stockpiled antiviral drugs are allocated to the states based on population. Washington's share is 913,701 courses—enough for about 15 percent of our state's population.
- It is expected that HHS will make antiviral drugs available when the World Health Organization determines continued human-to-human transmission of a new flu virus exists.
- Antivirals would be released in phases to the state Department of Health for distribution to local health jurisdictions based on county population.

State purchase of limited quantities of *subsidized* antivirals for pandemic response

- In 2007, HHS began offering state and local governments a limited supply of antiviral drugs and subsidized 25 percent of the cost.
- Washington can purchase up to 643,744 courses under this program—enough to treat about 10 percent of the state's population. Washington state and eight Washington counties have purchased enough antivirals, 417,902 courses, to treat just over 6.3 percent of the state's 6,587,600 people.
- The subsidized cost of the antivirals was \$14.43 per course for Tamiflu and \$16.29 for Relenza.
- The subsidized purchase program has been extended through September 1, 2009.
- A number of other local health jurisdictions, tribes, and hospitals are considering orders now that the program has been extended.

State purchase of additional antivirals for pandemic response at standard government prices

- Local government agencies can purchase additional antivirals through the Department of Health.
- The standard, non-subsidized government price was \$19.24 for Tamiflu and \$21.72 for Relenza through June 2008. A new contracted price has not yet been announced.

Important notes:

- Strict regulatory requirements apply to the storage, handling and dispensing (only by prescription) of these medications.
- The shelf life of Tamiflu is seven years and Relenza is five years. Stock rotation is currently prohibited, but discussions to allow some degree of stock rotations are ongoing.
- We believe additional antivirals have been purchased by the private sector but have no way to track purchases made on the open market outside of the federal contract.

For more information, please call:

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