



TFAH RESPONSE TO IOM REPORT: MORE MASKS NEEDED FOR POTENTIAL PANDEMIC

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WASHINGTON, April 27, 2006 – The following is a statement by Jeff Levi, PhD, Executive Director of Trust for America's Health:

“Today’s recommendation by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) that reusability of respirator masks is unadvisable and alternatively that respirator masks should be stockpiled for use in health care settings facing a pandemic flu outbreak is laudable and consistent with the World Health Organization policy.

It is now critical for the Department of Health and Human Services to make this a reality by increasing the nation’s stockpile of N-95 respirator masks. The U.S. currently only has about 100 million of N-95 masks on order for the Strategic National Stockpile. France, a country one-fifth the size of America, already has 200 million N-95 masks on order. The U.S. government needs to immediately examine ways to increase domestic production capacity, and ways to ensure continuity of mask production if an outbreak occurs. The recommendation for individual members of the public who become ill to wear surgical masks also raises issues of what will be done to increase production and supply of these masks to make them available to nearly 300 million American citizens.

Additionally, in the event of a pandemic, patients will be receiving care both in formal health care settings, in converted facilities like stadiums and at home, so measures must be taken now to make sure mask policies and other protections for health care workers will extend beyond formal health care settings.

A major priority in a pandemic is the continued functioning of the country’s health care system. For this to be a realistic possibility, we must take every precaution to protect our nation’s health care professionals. Health care workers, other care providers, and the public should expect no less from the federal government’s preparedness efforts.”

Trust for America's Health is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to saving lives by protecting the health of every community and working to make disease prevention a national priority. www.healthyamericans.org