



TFAH Calls for Stockpiling of Masks to Meet Medical Requirements to Prepare for the Threat of Pandemic Flu

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Washington, DC, May 3, 2007 -- Trust for America's Health (TFAH) supports the interim guidance issued today in *Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Report* concerning standards for use of masks and respirators in the event of a pandemic flu outbreak. Masks and N95 respirator masks are important elements of a multi-pronged approach to containing a potential pandemic that also includes use of vaccines, antiviral medication, and hygiene.

TFAH points out, however, that the U.S. stockpile of masks and respirators falls far short of the amounts that would be required to meet the levels needed for recommended use.

To reach recommended levels of production capacity, especially for N95 respirator masks, would have to be significantly increased. Funds must be directed to producing, purchasing and stockpiling the equipment.

“We shouldn't gamble with the health of Americans. The medical experts say we should be stockpiling masks and N95 respirators to protect our health care workers and to prevent the spread of a pandemic virus,” said Jeff Levi, PhD, Executive Director of TFAH. “Just as the country has made an investment to increase production capacity and stockpiles of vaccines and anti-virals, we must do the same for respirators and masks.”

TFAH also notes special attention must be paid to protecting children. Currently produced N-95 respirator masks are not manufactured to protect children. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has noted that children can be more susceptible than adults to infection, and compared to adults, children usually shed more influenza virus and for a longer period of time.

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