



The Right Prescription is Preparedness

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other leading health experts agree that the threat of a flu pandemic is real. They say that it is not a question of **IF** a flu pandemic will occur, but **WHEN** it will occur.

In April 2008, the greater Burlington community joined a national effort to encourage personal preparedness - *Take the Lead: Working Together to Prepare Now*. A group of local civic, faith-based, employer, and health care organizations, with the support of the Vermont Department of Health, City of Burlington, and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, will participate in preparedness activities, and will spread the word about the importance of personal preparedness.

Health care providers may wonder, *What is my role in promoting personal preparedness?* The answer is simple: Pandemic flu is a real threat, and taking a minute to reinforce this with patients will go a long way to encourage them to prepare. With just a few moments, physicians can answer questions, help patients understand the risk of pandemic influenza, and what to do about it.

The following actions have the potential to greatly reduce the burden of an influenza pandemic on communities across the nation:

- Stocking up on food, medicines, and supplies makes it easier to stay at home for extended periods of time.
- Improving health habits now helps lower the risk of infection and slows the spread of disease during a pandemic.
- Planning what you might do if school classes are dismissed, if you can't go to work, or if you a family member becomes sick and needs care makes dealing with the emergency easier.

If physicians validate their patients' questions and concerns and encourage them to prepare, they will be better able to withstand the impact of a pandemic and help contain the spread of illness to others. As health care providers, physicians are in a unique position to educate patients about the threat of pandemic and its health effects.

This ultimately matters because preparing now will make it easier for everyone during a flu pandemic. Government alone can't prepare the nation for a flu pandemic, so the responsibility is on trusted leaders in communities nationwide, including Burlington, to validate the risk of an influenza pandemic and encourage preparedness.

For more information about the *Take the Lead* effort in Burlington, or to download a *Take the Lead* toolkit with informational materials, visit: www.healthvermont.gov

For extensive information about pandemic flu, avian influenza and the world situation, visit www.pandemicflu.gov