



# Oregon

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To Health Directors of Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon



This letter is to share information with you about a federal program (first announced in February) allowing federally recognized tribes to purchase antiviral medication at a reduced price in support of pandemic influenza planning efforts. Antiviral medications are just one of several interventions to limit the spread and complications of pandemic influenza.

Stockpiling and subsequent use of these medications in an influenza pandemic by tribal departments providing critical services may help sustain these services and better protect the health and wellbeing of tribal members, assuming the pandemic strain is sensitive to these drugs. Other strategies such as “social distancing” to keep the ill from spreading disease, the use of personal protective equipment such as masks, vaccination when available, and the use of hand hygiene should be used concurrently with antiviral medication to best mitigate this threat.

With the recent appearance of novel H1N1 influenza in Oregon, the deadline for applications has been extended to **June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009**. Currently, novel H1N1 is sensitive to the antiviral medications available through this program, although this may change. While it is not certain, the extent of infection from novel H1N1 is expected to increase in Fall 2009.

There are two influenza medications available through this program: oseltamivir pills (Tamiflu®) and zanamivir (Relenza®), which is inhaled. These antiviral medicines have a proven effect in preventing infection by certain strains of seasonal influenza (prophylaxis), as well as a modest value in decreasing duration of illness, antibiotic use and hospitalization following infection (treatment). The actual value of using these medications for treatment or prevention of a future pandemic strain of influenza is unknown, although, as noted, the recent novel H1N1 strain currently appears to be sensitive to both medications.

Tribes that meet certain criteria (see below) may purchase antiviral medication on a federal contract through the Oregon Department of Human Services to (1) ensure treatment of ill employees during a pandemic and/or (2) ensure prophylaxis of critical employees.

Federally recognized tribes can purchase antiviral medicines through this program if:

- (1) they are able to meet manufacturer’s storage requirements (e.g. temperature control); and
- (2) they can provide medical oversight for the proper prescribing and tracking of the drugs.

Please consider whether or not your tribe would like to order antiviral medicines through this program. To provide you with more background on which to base your decision, the Public Health Division has established a website: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/flu/panflu.shtml> with information about antiviral medications, evidence regarding their potential effectiveness in combating pandemic influenza, and specific information about the antiviral purchasing program. If after reviewing this information, you have additional questions about this opportunity, please email your questions to us at [stockpile.publichealth@state.or.us](mailto:stockpile.publichealth@state.or.us).

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The deadline for receipt of applications to purchase antiviral medication through this program has been extended until 6/24/2009. In order to gain a better understanding of which tribes are interested in purchasing these medicines, we request that you send an email to [stockpile.publichealth@state.or.us](mailto:stockpile.publichealth@state.or.us) by June 15, 2009 if your tribe is considering purchase of antiviral medication through this program.

Further information about the program, including application materials, are available on the State of Oregon's on-line purchasing system ORPIN (<http://orpin.oregon.gov>). Those new to ORPIN can call 503-378-4642, the orpin help number, to get help with log-in access and navigating around the site. You can then review the program documents, listed under "DHS-2819-09", complete the application in those materials and fax or mail the application to the address provided. All applications will be reviewed for their adherence to the above criteria.

When deciding whether or not to order, besides the criteria mentioned above, please also consider the following information:

Community-based mitigation measures (e.g., social distancing) will be as important as or more important than antiviral prophylaxis to limit transmission of pandemic influenza.

Continued effectiveness of these drugs against novel H1N1, or their effectiveness against other future pandemic influenza strains cannot be guaranteed.

Tamiflu has a shelf life of 7 years; Relenza's shelf-life is 5 years; if a pandemic has not occurred within this time-frame, these drugs will need to be discarded.

Influenza antiviral medications are used for *treatment* – to treat people who are ill with influenza, or for *prophylaxis* - to prevent well people from getting ill from influenza. For antiviral prophylaxis, people must take one pill a day for the *entire duration of their exposure to influenza*, which could be 12 weeks or longer. Drug usage beyond the approved six weeks duration may require special FDA permission, including potentially administering the drugs under investigational new drug guidelines.

Tribes/agencies purchasing antiviral medicines on this contract must abide by specific guidelines for use. (See materials at <http://orpin.oregon.gov> .)

Again, please feel free to contact us at [stockpile.publichealth@state.or.us](mailto:stockpile.publichealth@state.or.us) if you have questions about the program.

Sincerely,

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