

How will antivirals be used in an influenza pandemic?

FACT SHEET FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

This fact sheet provides an overview for health care providers about antiviral use in an influenza pandemic.

How will antiviral drugs be used?

Antiviral drugs are medications that are used for the ongoing prevention and treatment of influenza. They work by reducing the ability of the virus to reproduce.

If taken as early as possible but within 48 hours of symptoms, they can reduce flu symptoms, shorten the length of the illness, and reduce serious complications.

Antiviral drugs may also be used as prophylaxis to prevent illness. A provincial policy on the use of antivirals for prevention during an influenza pandemic has not yet been developed.

Will antivirals be effective in a pandemic?

The specific characteristics of the virus causing influenza in a pandemic will not be known until the time of the pandemic. However it is anticipated that it will behave as other influenza-causing viruses. It is assumed that antiviral drugs will be effective in a pandemic.

Once a pandemic virus emerges, the antiviral strategy may change depending on the characteristics of the influenza pandemic virus; therefore, health care providers should keep abreast of the current direction from the province during a flu pandemic (for information on communications during a pandemic, go to the

health care provider fact sheet titled, *How will I be kept informed during a flu pandemic?* at http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/pan_flu_pro_fs.html

How will antiviral drugs be accessed by the public?

The primary source of antivirals for the public will be at the Flu Centres (Assessment, Treatment and Referral Centres). While it is anticipated that the majority of the population will be assessed and treated for flu at these Flu Centres, hospitals and other settings will require some antivirals to treat the most severely ill who will not be able to remain in the community.

Are there going to be antivirals stockpiled for prophylaxis of health care providers?

The provincial government has not established a policy on prophylaxis for critical infrastructure workers in the province. The decision as to whether to publicly fund prophylaxis will consider the science, safety of the worker, economics, logistics and ethical decision-making.

Has enough antiviral been stockpiled?

Ontario has enough antiviral drugs stockpiled to treat 25 per cent of the population of the province, which according to the World Health Organization should be enough antiviral drugs to provide treatment to anyone who needs it during a pandemic.

Any policy decision that includes antivirals for prophylaxis will require additional purchases of antivirals.

For more information

Visit our website at:

www.health.gov.on.ca/pandemic

Or call

INFOline 1-866-801-7242