



**TRUST FOR AMERICA'S HEALTH ISSUES POLICY PAPER
"FACING THE FLU: FROM THE BIRD FLU TO A POSSIBLE
PANDEMIC, WHY ISN'T AMERICA READY?"**

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WASHINGTON, February 24, 2004 — Trust for America's Health (TFAH) today released a policy paper "Facing the Flu: From the Bird Flu to a Possible Pandemic, Why Isn't America Ready?"

"Between 10 and 20 percent of the U.S. population is estimated to contract influenza annually. Each year, it is responsible for approximately 36,000 deaths in this country. However, the nation lacks a unified and effective flu management strategy," said Shelley A. Hearne, Dr.PH, Executive Director of TFAH.

The paper concludes that: "The initial response to the recent emergence of avian flu underscores the importance of strong public health systems, from the global to the local, as well as integrated and well-functioning systems for health care delivery. Future preparedness also will depend on a well-educated and trained clinical and public health workforce. In addition, the nation needs a sound research agenda to address new and long-term requirements into the nature of infectious disease threats, human host responses, and the opportunities to develop new diagnostics, drugs, and vaccines."

Five fundamental flu questions were considered: 1) While this season's flu outbreak seemed to receive more attention than in previous years, why can't health officials determine if more Americans actually contracted the flu than usual? 2) How is the severity of a flu outbreak determined? 3) Why did the vaccines run out and prove ineffective this flu season? 4) What is the bird flu? 5) Why are public health experts particularly concerned about this strain of the bird flu?

The full policy paper is available on the TFAH Web site: www.healthyamericans.org

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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.