



U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Protecting and Promoting Your Health

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About FDA

Meet Margaret A. Hamburg, M.D., Commissioner of Food and Drugs



Margaret A. Hamburg became the 21st commissioner of food and drugs on May 18, 2009. The second woman to be nominated for this position, she is an experienced medical doctor, scientist, and public health executive.

As the top official of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Dr. Hamburg is committed to strengthening programs and policies that enable the agency to carry out its mission to protect and promote the public health. "Strengthening FDA's programs and policies will help us protect the safety of the food supply, give the public access to safe and effective medical products, find novel ways to prevent illness and promote health, and be transparent in explaining our decision-making," says Dr. Hamburg. "A strong FDA is an agency that the American public can count on."

Dr. Hamburg graduated from Harvard Medical School and completed her residency in internal medicine at what is now New York–Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. She conducted research on neuroscience at Rockefeller University, studied neuropharmacology at the National Institute of Mental Health, and later focused on AIDS research as assistant director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

From 2005 to 2009, Dr. Hamburg was the senior scientist at the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a foundation dedicated to reducing the threat to public safety from nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. From 2001 to 2005, as the foundation's vice president for biological programs, she advocated for broad reforms to confront the dangers of modern bioterrorism as well as the threats of naturally occurring infectious diseases such as pandemic flu.

In 1997, Dr. Hamburg accepted the position of assistant secretary for policy and evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In 1994, she was elected to the membership in the Institute of Medicine, one of the youngest persons to be so honored.

From 1991 to 1997, Dr. Hamburg served as commissioner of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. In this position, she improved services for women and children, promoted needle-exchange programs to reduce the spread of HIV, and initiated the nation's first public health bioterrorism defense program. Her most celebrated achievement was curbing the spread of tuberculosis, which resurged as a major public health threat in the 1990s. As a result of Dr. Hamburg's reforms, New York City's TB rate fell significantly over a five-year span. Her innovative approach, which included sending health care workers to patients' homes to make sure they completed the drug regimen, is now a model for health departments worldwide.

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