

Reducing Flu in the Workplace

Up to 20% of people in the United States contract the flu each year. The peak of the flu season occurs during the months of January and February with the average flu-related absence being one work week.

In order to prevent illness exposure incidents in the workplace, the following universal precautions should be taken:

1. Employees should wash hands frequently with soap and water. Hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of germs & illnesses.
2. Avoid hand-to-face contact. Hand-to-face transmission is the number one way in which the flu is spread.
3. Each employee should remember to cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when they cough or sneeze and immediately dispose of the tissue, then wash their hands. Or cough/sneeze into sleeve if no tissue available.
4. Clean desktops, keyboards, doorknobs, and other work surfaces regularly.
5. Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – registered cleaning products. Carefully read the cleaning product labels to insure that they will effectively kill influenza and cold viruses.
6. The CDC recommends that employees should stay home when they are ill, especially if symptoms include a high fever, and at least 24 hours after the fever is gone.



Universal Precautions, when practiced regularly, are a method of infection control and can greatly reduce the spread of illness in the workplace. A healthy workplace is a place of greater motivation and productivity, with fewer absences.

FYI, proper hand washing includes: **Wetting** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold). **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with soap. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. **Rinse** and **Dry**.

Encourage employees to get their Flu Shots Annually!

WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

Symptoms to consider when making your own preliminary diagnosis:

Influenza

Antiviral medications can help people feel better if taken within 48 hours of onset of symptoms

- Headache
- High fever
- Dry cough
- Chest pains
- Chills
- Severe fatigue
- Severe aches

NOTE: H1N1 virus also causes some gastrointestinal distress

Cold

Colds are caused by a different virus; symptoms are less severe — and they come on more gradually than flu

- Sneezing
- Stuffy nose
- Hacking cough
- Mild sore throat
- Mild fatigue

Strep throat

A sore throat, but no stuffy nose, may mean it's a streptococcal bacterial infection — antibiotics can help

- High fever
- Pus on tonsils
- Very sore throat

Stomach flu

Virus enters via mouth and multiplies in small intestine; symptoms can appear in a few hours, but usually take a day; food poisoning typically is a bacterial infection, such as E. coli

- Headache
- Vomiting
- Fatigue
- Diarrhea

FOLLOWING AN INFECTION

FLU TRAVELS

Flu viruses constantly mutate, making it tough for our immune defenses to recognize the virus and combat it. Since the current strain of the H1N1 virus (known as swine flu) is relatively new, it may be more contagious than seasonal flu, although it seems no more virulent and most cases should be resolved without significant medical intervention. Here is a look at how flu infections spread:

WAYS TO AVOID FLU

Health officials recommend most people get a flu shot — including for the H1N1 virus

Vaccination

- Vaccination provides up to 90% protection
- Swine flu shots should be ready by October
- It takes about two weeks before protection begins
- H1N1 vaccination will be in two doses, a couple weeks apart; healthy adults may only need one H1N1 vaccination
- Seasonal flu vaccination is one shot, but for children under 9 they may need two seasonal flu shots, bringing the total to four

Wash hands

Wash hands five times a day for at least 20 seconds; this is what it takes to prevent the spread of germs and viruses; less than half the people wash this long and this often

Wear mask

Masks can be worn by sick people so any droplets they expel do not easily land on objects or people; most masks are not as effective if worn by people who are well trying to avoid breathing in a virus

