

The flu (influenza) is a contagious disease that affects a person's respiratory tract (nose, throat, and lungs). Flu cases can be mild or severe and can spread easily in workplaces through coughs and sneezes. Infected employees can spread the flu before showing any signs of illness, typically one day before symptoms develop and up to five to seven days after becoming sick. The flu virus should be taken seriously – complications such as bacterial pneumonia or worsening of other chronic medical conditions can lead to hospitalization or even death.



Flu Symptoms

Symptoms begin about one to four days after a person is exposed and may include:

- fever or chills
- headache
- body or muscle aches
- tiredness
- dry cough
- sore throat
- nasal congestion
- vomiting and diarrhea.

Avoiding the Flu

- Encourage employees to get a seasonal flu vaccine. Consider hosting a flu vaccination clinic at your workplace by contracting with a pharmacy or community vaccinator.
- Keep a clean workplace. Provide tissues, soap and water, alcohol-based hand rubs, cleaning and sanitizing materials, disposable towels, and no-touch wastebaskets where employees can dispose of tissues in lobbies, halls, and restrooms.
- Post instructions in the workplace for:
 - Proper hand washing – wash hands frequently, rub hands together with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and use an alcohol-based hand rub when soap and water aren't available.
 - Cough etiquette – cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or an upper arm shirtsleeve.

- Train on other flu-prevention measures, such as:
 - avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth;
 - avoiding shaking hands or otherwise coming into contact with others who might be ill; and
 - cleaning and disinfecting personal workspaces, door knobs, copiers, computers, and telephones.
- Have a sick-leave policy that lets employees stay home without penalty when sick. The Centers for Disease Control recommends that workers with a fever or respiratory symptoms stay home until 24 hours after the fever ends (100° F or lower), without use of medication.
- Encourage a healthy lifestyle that includes a nutritious diet and enough exercise and rest (seven to eight hours per night for adults). Discourage alcohol and tobacco use.

This document was produced by the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) and is considered accurate at the time of publication.

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