

Tips to Prevent Flu in the Workplace



With the current H1N1 (swine) flu outbreak, everyone should be practicing good hygiene in the workplace to minimize transmission of this virus. .

The cold and flu season typically runs from November through April. The H1N1 (swine) flu outbreak started in the spring time, which correlates with the onset of the flu season in the southern hemisphere. Readily spread when people are indoors, flu viruses are often passed along from person to person and surface to surface in the workplace. According to the CDC, people are most contagious almost immediately and for about 5 days after being infected with the flu – even before symptoms develop. However, there are many actions you can take to prevent the spread of flu viruses at work.



Flu Prevention in the Workplace

- ❖ Wash Your Hands for at least 15-20 seconds with soap many times a day or sanitize with an alcohol-gel hand sanitizer, especially following contact with potentially contaminated surfaces:
 - Hands or face of others – including handshakes
 - Doorknob or handle (including microwave and refrigerator)
 - Copier machine buttons or parts
 - Another person's keyboard or phone
 - Coffee pot handle
 - Elevator button
 - Countertop
 - Food or food container handled by others
 - Shared books or other office materials
 - Shared hand or power tools
- ❖ Following washing, turn off the faucet with a paper towel
- ❖ Dry your hands with an air dryer or a clean paper towel
- ❖ Use a paper towel to open the bathroom door and dispose of paper towel in a trash bin outside of door
- ❖ Use a hand sanitizer between washing
- ❖ Avoid touching your face, eyes, or rubbing your nose

- ❖ Wash out your water bottle daily
- ❖ Clean shared items such as phones, keyboards, handles and door knobs with alcohol wipes or other sanitizer-type wipes
- ❖ Avoid close contact with anyone who has a cold or flu
- ❖ Sneeze and cough into a tissue, throw the tissue away, and then wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue cough or sneeze into your elbow rather than your hand



- ❖ Drink plenty of fluids, but do not share drinking cups or straws
- ❖ Get lots of fresh air
- ❖ Exercise regularly and frequently
- ❖ Eat healthy foods such as whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables
- ❖ Don't smoke and decrease alcohol consumption
- ❖ Relax – stress can decrease immunity
- ❖ Avoid contact with known allergens - allergies affecting the nose or throat may increase the chances of getting a cold or flu



Flu Prevention

The annual influenza vaccine is determined from the previous season's most common strains and forecasting which strains are likely to cause disease in the coming season. Though the vaccine cannot protect against all strains of flu, it is currently the best preventive measure available) in addition to hand washing and good hygiene.)

For recommendations on whether to get immunized, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>.



Wash you hands! The single best thing you can do to prevent the flu.

Treating the Flu

- ❖ If you do get sick, stay at home if you can
- ❖ Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water or juices – between 9-13 cups per day)
- ❖ De-stress and avoid strenuous activity – physical, emotional, or mental stress can be major drains on the immune system
- ❖ Get plenty of rest – most people need seven to nine hours of sleep each night
- ❖ Drink green tea or ginger tea each stimulate the immune system to fight off infections
- ❖ Ask your doctor about over the counter drugs which may alleviate symptoms
- ❖ In cases of serious outbreaks like H1N1 (swine) flu, follow public health advisories about school closures, avoiding crowds, etc
- ❖ There are two antiviral medications (oseltamivir and zenamivir) that are effective against most flu viruses and are prescribed for serious infections
- ❖ Most importantly, seek medical attention if any of the following occur: difficulty breathing or chest pain; purple or blue discoloration of the lips; vomiting or inability to keep down fluids; signs of dehydration (dizziness when standing, absence of urine, lack of tears in infants);

seizures; confusion or decreased responsiveness.

Have these Items Handy While at Work

- ❖ Water, decaffeinated tea, or juice
- ❖ Tissues
- ❖ Eye drops
- ❖ Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- ❖ Hand cream or lotion
- ❖ Over the counter drugs
- ❖ Cough drops/lozenges
- ❖ Vitamins

For more information visit the Centers for Disease Control at <http://www.cdc.gov/protect/habits/htm>.

