

Influenza (“The Flu”) Recommendations for Businesses

Influenza (“the flu”) is a respiratory disease that spreads easily. It is characterized by the sudden onset of fever, body aches, sore throat, headache, tiredness and cough. The following recommendations can help prevent serious illness and absenteeism among employees.

- Encourage all high-risk workers, especially those with medical conditions, to get a flu shot. It is never too late to get a flu shot; however, the sooner the better.
- **Ill employees should not come to work.** Excluding ill employees from the work place can help reduce the spread of the illness to other employees.
- Wash hands several times a day, using soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds (about the time it takes to sing the ABCs). Dry hands with paper towels or automatic dryers. Restrooms should be checked regularly to ensure that soap and paper towels are available for employee use.
- Have tissues available in work areas for runny noses or sneezing. Individuals always should cover their mouths when coughing and use a disposable tissue when sneezing or blowing their noses. Tissues should be thrown away immediately, and then hands should be washed. (If you cannot wash hands, rub hands with an alcohol hand sanitizer.)
- Employees should be encouraged to contact their physician when they become ill during the flu season. If taken early in the illness, antiviral drugs may reduce the severity and length of the flu.
- Employees should avoid sharing glasses, forks, spoons, etc.
- Common-use surfaces – such as water fountains, door handles, handrails, eating surfaces, desks, etc. – should be cleaned frequently with disinfectants. Commercial disinfectants or bleach solutions are appropriate. (Mixing ¼ cup bleach with 1 gallon of water makes a bleach solution. Bleach solutions should be prepared daily.)