

Preventing Flu in the Workplace

Each year, the flu affects as many as 1 out of 5 people living in the United States. Flu in the workplace can lead to more absences, less productivity, and higher medical and insurance-related costs. The best way to prevent flu in the workplace is to get the flu vaccine. Studies show that healthy, working adults who get vaccinated have fewer days of influenza-like illness, doctor visits, and sick days.¹ Thus, preventing the flu at your workplace can increase productivity and decrease employee and employer medical and insurance costs.

What are the signs and symptoms of the flu?

- Cough
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle aches
- Tiredness

Some people may also experience fever and stomach problems.

How serious is the flu?

The flu can cause serious problems, including pneumonia. The flu may lead to hospitalization or even death.

How does the flu spread?

The flu is usually spread from person to person through droplets from a sick person's cough or sneeze. It can also spread by touching a surface or an object that has flu virus on it (such as a doorknob or computer keyboard), and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

How can you prevent flu in the workplace?

Preventing flu in your workplace can be easy. The following steps will help create a flu-free environment:

- Encourage your employees to get a flu vaccine for themselves and all family members 6 months of age and older.
- Work with a community mass vaccinator to schedule an onsite flu vaccination clinic. (Mass vaccinators are listed in the Resource List to the right.)
- Give employees time off to get vaccinated.
- Cover flu vaccines with low or no out-of-pocket costs through your company's health plans.
- Promote flu vaccines through staff meetings, employee newsletters, the intranet, email notices, paystub reminders, or an employee vaccination contest.
- Promote healthy practices including covering coughs and sneezes and washing hands often with soap and warm water.
- Provide tissues, no-touch trash cans, hand soap, hand sanitizer, disinfectants and disposable towels for employees to clean their work surfaces.
- Encourage employees to stay home when sick.
- Post and distribute educational materials.

If you don't have health insurance or a regular doctor or your doctor doesn't offer flu vaccines, dial 2-1-1 or visit www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip for a list of low-cost immunization clinics.

References

1. Nichol KL, Lind A, Margolis KL, et al. The effectiveness of vaccination against influenza in healthy working adults. *N Engl J Med.* 1995;333:889-93.



Resources

California Department of Public Health:
www.eziz.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
www.cdc.gov/flu/business

LA County Department of Public Health:
www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/ip

National Business Group on Health:
www.businessgrouphealth.org/preventive

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services:
www.flu.gov/professional/business/

Onsite vaccination vendors:

- Flu Busters: www.flubusters.com
- Flu*Ease, Inc: www.fluease.net
- Maxim Health Systems:
www.findaflushot.com
- Mollen Immunization Clinics:
www.flushotsusa.com
- Occuvax: www.occuvax.com
- VaxAmerica: www.vaxamerica.com

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health does not endorse these vendors.

Prevention Tips

- Get vaccinated every year
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water
- Stay home if you're sick

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