



Preventing the Spread of Influenza in a Work Setting How You Can Help

Influenza, or the “flu”, is spread mainly from person to person when people cough or sneeze near one another. Sometimes it can be spread when a person touches nose drainage or saliva from an infected person and then touches one’s own mouth or nose before washing hands.

The best way to prevent serious illness from influenza is to get immunized. All persons over aged 6 months are encouraged to receive an influenza vaccine each year. Immunization is strongly recommended for persons in the categories listed below. Additional steps will also help protect yourself, your co-workers, and your family from getting the flu.

Immunization

All persons in the following categories should be immunized

1. Adults aged 50 and over
2. Persons with chronic medical conditions*
3. Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season
4. Health care workers and employees of assisted living facilities and other residences of persons at high risk of complications from influenza
5. Out-of-home care givers and household contacts of children less than 6 months old
6. Workers under 18 on chronic aspirin therapy

Respiratory Hygiene

Workers should practice good cough etiquette / respiratory hygiene

1. Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing
As an alternative to hand washing, hands may be sanitized with alcohol gel
Tissues, waste containers, and alcohol gel should be available at work stations and other convenient locations
2. Throw the tissue into a waste container immediately after use
3. Wash hands with soap and water immediately after discarding tissue

Hand Hygiene

Make Sure sink areas have plenty of soap and paper towels available

To help protect against respiratory illnesses, workers should wash hands

1. as a part of respiratory hygiene
2. before eating
3. after contact with persons with respiratory illnesses
4. whenever hands are soiled

Hands should be washed with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds with rubbing action and dried with a paper towel. A clean paper towel should be used to turn off water faucets.

An effective and convenient alternative to soap and water is cleaning hands with alcohol gel. Employers are encouraged to supply workers with bottles of alcohol gel at their work stations for convenient use.

Exclusion

Workers who develop symptoms of influenza (fever, chills, sore throat, cough, headache, muscle aches) while at work should go home as soon as possible.

If ill persons are not able to go home right away, they should be confined in a separate area away from others.

Persons with influenza should stay at home for at least 5 to 7 days after onset of symptoms.

* People with chronic medical conditions include those who have chronic disorders of the pulmonary or cardiovascular systems, including asthma (hypertension is not considered a high-risk condition), persons who required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the preceding year because of chronic metabolic diseases (inc. diabetes mellitus), renal dysfunction, hemoglobinopathies, or immunosuppression (inc. immunosuppression caused by medications or by human immunodeficiency virus [HIV]), and persons with any condition (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other neuromuscular disorders) that can compromise respiratory function, the handling of respiratory secretions, or increase the risk for aspiration.