

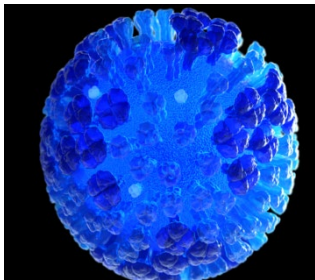
Sample Blog Post  
Work Wellness (non-clinical audience)

## Flu Season

It's October and time to think of the upcoming influenza or flu season!

**The flu is spread by droplets when a person coughs, sneezes, or touches an object with flu virus on it, such as a door handle. The virus enters the body through the nose, mouth, or lungs. People are most contagious 1 day before symptoms appear and 4-5 days after.**

Symptoms can last up to 10 days and range from mild to so severe the person dies. Anti-viral medicine taken within 24 to 48 hours of getting sick may decrease the severity and shorten the course, but there is no cure.



**[The flu vaccine is currently the best way to prevent the flu.](#)** Flu vaccines are given every year because the viruses change in nature slightly each time they reproduce.

**Influenza type A and influenza type B viruses** cause the flu. The vaccines are designed to protect against the strains of influenza A and B virus most likely in circulation during flu season.

**Everyone older than 6 months of age should receive the flu vaccine.** Persons most at risk for flu complications are infants, children, pregnant women, and adults with chronic health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma. Complications can include pneumonia, dehydration, and ear infections. The flu may worsen existing chronic health problems.

### How does the flu affect you as an employer?

Flu and upper respiratory infections (colds) are responsible for higher rates of absenteeism and presenteeism (coming to work sick), cause lower rates of work productivity, and higher health costs in medical claims.

#### Studies show:

- **Absences for colds/flu average 70%** vs. 30 % for other causes.
- Employees with children who have colds/flu have higher absentee rates.
- **Sick employees** are less productive and **manage only 4.8 hours of actual work.**
- **72% of the flu spread at work is due to sick workers coming in.**

***Just 1 paid sick day reduced workplace infections by 25%, and 2 paid sick days reduced flu spread by 39%.***

### **What can you do as an employer?**

1. [Encourage employees to get the flu vaccine.](#)
2. Urge participation in any flu vaccination program you offer.
3. Consider providing sick days during flu season and support employee use of them.
4. Actively promote staying home when sick, especially if an employee has a fever.
5. Provide sanitizing wipes and hand sanitizers for employees to wipe down phones, desks, computer keyboards, and door handles.

The flu season comes every fall and winter when flu viruses are most active. Encouraging prevention by flu vaccination and actively discouraging coming to work sick will go a long way toward curbing productivity and revenue losses during flu season.

**By Sussan K. Sutphen, MD, MEd**

### **More Information**

Influenza (Flu)

<https://www.cdc.gov/flu/index.htm>

## References

1. Palmer LA, Rousculp MD, Johnston SS, Mahadevia PJ, Nichol KL. Effect of influenza-like illness and other wintertime respiratory illnesses on worker productivity: The child and household influenza-illness and employee functions (CHIEF) study. *Clin Infect Dis*. 2009 Feb 1; 48 (3): 292-8.
2. Nichol KL, D'Heilly SJ, Greenberg MD, Ehlinger E. Burden of influenza-like illness and effectiveness of influenza vaccination among working adults aged 50-64 years. *Pharmacoeconomics*. 2008; 26(11): 911-924.
3. Kumar S, Grefenstette JJ, Galloway D, Albert SM, Burke DS. Policies to reduce influenza in the workplace: impact assessments using an agent-based model. *Hum Vaccin Immunother*. 2013 Jan 15: 9(4).