

FACT SHEET

Recommendations for Business

INFLUENZA

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.

- Encourage all workers, especially those with medical conditions, to get the flu shot. A flu shot greatly reduces the chance of getting the flu and decreases the chance of being seriously ill, thus reducing absenteeism. It is never too late to get the flu shot; however, the sooner the better.
- Employees with symptoms of the flu should not come to work. Excluding ill employees from the work place can help reduce the spread of the illness to other employees.
- People often catch influenza and other viruses by picking up the virus on their hands, and then touching their nose, eyes, or mouth. Washing hands several times a day, with running warm water, using soap, generating friction for 15 seconds, and drying hands with paper towels or automatic hand dryers will prevent influenza as well as other diseases caused by viruses or bacteria. Restrooms should be checked regularly to ensure that soap and paper towels are available for employee use.
- Influenza is often spread by coughs and sneezes. Availability of tissues in work areas for runny noses and sneezing will also prevent the spread of influenza. Individuals should always cover their mouths when coughing and use a tissue when sneezing or blowing their nose. Tissues should be thrown away immediately, and then hands should be washed. (If you cannot wash your hands, cleanse your hands with a hand gel that contains alcohol.)
- Employees should be encouraged to contact their physician when they become ill during flu season. If they are ill with the flu, anti-viral drugs, when they are prescribed early in the illness may reduce the severity and length of illness. Employees should not share 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 a bleach solution mixed daily (mix ¼ cup bleach with 1 gallon of water) should be used.

Who should get the flu shot: (for more information contact your healthcare provider or local health department)

- Persons 50 years old or older
- Infants 6 months through 23 months old and their household contacts up to 18 years old, as well as all other high-risk household individuals.
- Anyone older than 6 months old who requires regular medical follow-up or was hospitalized during the preceding year because of diseases like diabetes, cancer, chronic renal, heart or lung disease, etc.
- Women who will be in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season
- Household members (including children) of persons in high-risk groups
- Any person who wishes to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill with influenza
- Persons who provide essential community services (such as healthcare providers, fire and police). This will minimize disruption of essential activities during influenza outbreaks.