



H1N1 Employee Policies Guidance

October 15, 2009



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

One of the best ways to reduce the spread of influenza is to keep sick people away from well people. Due to the nature of influenza, it is not possible to quickly determine if workers who are ill have H1N1, seasonal flu, or a simple cold. **Both managers and staff, working together, can help prevent the spread of infectious disease.** Therefore, the following guidelines are recommended:

Staff Guidelines:

1. **Employees who have symptoms of influenza-like-illness (ILI) should stay home** and not return to work until they have been free of fever (100° F [37.8° C] or greater) at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, and feel well.
2. **Those employees who become ill during the work day should be:**
 - Separated from other workers and asked to go home promptly
 - If ill employees cannot be placed in an area away from others, they should be given a surgical mask to wear before they go home and only if they can tolerate it.
 - Employees exposed to a sick co-worker should monitor themselves for symptoms of ILI and stay home if they are sick.
3. The simplest way to protect against ILI is to:
 - **Cover coughs and sneezes.** In the absence of a tissue, sneeze or cough into one's sleeve or elbow. Dispose of tissues immediately.
 - **Wash your hands frequently** with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner, especially after coughing or sneezing.
 - **Frequently clean all commonly touched surfaces** in the workplace such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the label directions. No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended.
4. **Get vaccinated for seasonal flu.** Seasonal flu will also be circulating at the same time as H1N1 pandemic flu. Seasonal flu shots are available now from your healthcare provider and throughout flu season. Employee vaccine clinics for seasonal flu begin on Sept. 21, 2009.
5. **Some employees are at higher risk for complications from influenza.** These include those with chronic lung disease such as asthma, pregnant women, heart disease, diabetes and diseases or treatments that suppress the immune system. These employees are strongly encouraged to get the H1N1 vaccination and the seasonal flu vaccination. If these employees do become ill with ILI, they should see their healthcare provider immediately so that antiviral medications can be started in a timely fashion.



Manager/Supervisor Guidelines:

1. All of the above information for staff applies to management's personal health care as well.
2. Advise employees to be alert to any signs of fever or other influenza-like-illness (ILI) before reporting to work each day.
3. Expect sick employees to be out for about 3-5 days in most cases, even if antiviral medications are used.
4. Do not require a doctor's note for employees who are ill with ILI to validate their illness or to return to work, as doctors' offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and may not be able to provide documentation in a timely manner.
5. Employees who are well but have an ill family member at home with ILI can go to work as usual. Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit workers to stay home to care for an ill family member.