

Minimize the Flu and Keep your Company Functioning

The current HINI flu virus has caused a number of people to become sick but is unlikely to reach pandemic proportions if people are prepared and take reasonable precautions. There are a number of things that employers and employees can do to provide added protection. Doctors are saying that everyone needs to practice flu prevention.

- Request employees to take extra precautions in the office to avoid spreading the virus. Ask employees to refrain from handshaking or kissing in the workplace, especially if someone has a cold, or flu-like symptoms. When a colleague or outsider does not shake hands with you, don't be offended. After shaking hands with someone, be sure not to touch your face, because your hands will transmit the flu virus to your mouth.
- Make it important for employees to practice prevention and remind them frequently. When employees are sick with flu-like symptoms, or if their children are at home sick, managers should encourage employees to work from home or ask them to take a day off on sick leave. If you aren't feeling well, don't shake hands with anyone. If you are sneezing and coughing frequently, take the day off work to keep your germs to yourself.
- If you sneeze, be sure to sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue, not into your hands. Sneezes can spread the virus because droplets can fly up to 6 feet. People inhale these droplets into their lungs and the virus is transmitted. Dispose of tissues in garbage cans immediately and do not leave them lying around on desks.
- Employers can buy a supply of small gel hand sanitizer bottles and distribute them throughout the office for employees. Remind employees to use them frequently. Have them available in lunch rooms and meeting rooms. It is a small price to pay for better overall health.
- Remind employees to wash their hands properly and often with soap and warm to hot water for at least 20 seconds. Carry hand sanitizer such as Purell with you, for times when you can't wash your hands. But when your hands are dirty, soap and water is always the best method of sanitizing.
- Ask your office cleaning service to be more careful with their cleaning routine. The H1N1 flu strain is resistant to breakdown. It will live on surfaces such as doorknobs, keyboards and pens for at least two hours.
- Do not let other employees use your phone, pen or keyboard as much as possible. Sanitize hands frequently after touching surfaces other people's equipment, phones, papers, or pens. Use disinfectant on surfaces where it is appropriate.



- Be vigilant in common areas, such as office lounges, meeting rooms, kitchens and washrooms. Use disposable cups or provide your own coffee mug and keep it with you. Wash it frequently and don't let others use it. Use the dishwasher if it's available. In washrooms, use a paper towel to open the door on your way out and then throw it in the trash bin. Try to avoid touching sinks and garbage areas with clean hands.

- Remind employees that healthy eating and living is the key to avoiding the flu. Proper diet will strengthen the immune system. There are many options for staying healthy – proper diet with lots of fruits and vegetables, vitamins; getting lots of rest, sleep and exercise are the usual options.

The H1N1 Flu has the potential to have a serious impact on companies and employees if it gains a foothold in the company. Following a few simple and sensible practices will provide healthy options for employees and employers alike.

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