

Workforce Prevention and Influenza Illness Policy Guidelines

This document provides guidance to (Company) _____ supervisors and employees on how to handle influenza-like illness in the (Company) _____ workplace.

OVERVIEW

Influenza is a respiratory disease caused by the influenza virus. Influenza is spread primarily person-to-person through coughing, sneezing, or nasal secretions from infected people, or when someone touches something with flu viruses on it before touching their mouths or noses. Infected people can spread the virus to others even before symptoms develop, and can be contagious for several days after becoming sick.

Employees experiencing flu-like symptoms such as fever and chills with cough, sore throat, head and muscle ache, nasal congestion and fatigue should not come to work or should leave work to go home. Employees should stay home and avoid contact with other people until they have no symptoms for 24 hours without medication. Employees can plan to return to work 24 hours after fever subsides, without use of fever lowering medications. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring their staff members to stay away from work when experiencing influenza-like illness. Employees have a duty to practice healthy hygiene habits to prevent the spread of disease, and an expectation of working in an environment free of influenza-like illness. Those with severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, or at higher risk for complication from influenza should call their health care provider.

If you are an employee who is experiencing flu-like symptoms:

- Inform your supervisor that you are experiencing flu-like symptoms and leave the workplace as soon as possible. To avoid spreading the virus, you should stay at home.
- If your symptoms are severe or you are a person at higher risk for complications of influenza, including people 50 and older, pregnant women, and those with health conditions such as asthma or chronic respiratory diseases, heart, kidney or liver disease, sickle cell anemia, diabetes weakened immune system from illness or medication and morbid obesity, you should contact your health care provider. You should keep away from others as much as possible. Cover your mouth and nose

with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Put your used tissue in the trash basket. Then, wash your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

- In most cases, you should plan on returning to work only after 24 hours has passed with no fever (fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine).

If you are the supervisor of an employee who is exhibiting flu-like symptoms:

- Ask the employee to leave the workplace, i.e., go home and stay home.
- If the employee does not leave the workplace, contact Human Resources or the as appropriate. Designated Human Resources or Employee Health Clinic staff may require the employee to leave the workplace until symptoms have cleared for 24 hours without medication in order to prevent the spread of illness to others.
- As with any other medical condition, and to ensure the privacy of personal health information, you should not ask or require the employee to tell you if they have been diagnosed with flu-like illness.
- In certain cases, you may wish to consult with Human Resources or Employee Health Clinic before permitting an employee to return to the workplace. However, employees do not need a doctor's note to return to work unless they are returning from short-term disability. They will then need to follow work procedures related to short-term disability.
- You do not need to take special precautions once the employee has returned to work.

If you are the coworker of an employee who is exhibiting flu-like symptoms:

- If a coworker is exhibiting flu-like symptoms, remind them cover their cough and to wash their hands. If they are not leaving the workplace, speak to your supervisor.
- Protect yourself and others from getting sick by practicing good hygiene at all times. Recommended precautions include washing your hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth to prevent the spread of germs.
- The best way to protect yourself from influenza is to be vaccinated!

(Company)_____ Human Resources or Health Clinic’s Role

(Company)_____ Human Resources or Employee Health Clinic follows the recommendations from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to prevent influenza and minimize exposures in the workplace. Staff members in Employee Health Services can answer questions and concerns and assist in educating staff members, especially those at higher risk for influenza-related illness than the general population.

More information on seasonal influenza can be found here:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/flu/html/public/general.shtml>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/business/>

