

simple steps  
to reduce

workplace  
flu exposure.





When influenza strikes, it can knock you and your team off their feet fast, dealing a major blow to both the health of your staff and the efficiency of your operations. While you can never eliminate the threat of malicious microscopic organisms entirely, there are still steps you can take to reduce the likelihood of workers contracting the flu and, in the event of an infection, prevent it from spreading among your team. Here are four flu-fighting controls that you can incorporate into your workplace today to keep everyone healthy and humming along this flu season.

## promote vaccinations

Getting a flu shot is still the most effective way to prevent against contracting the disease, so encouraging all members of your staff to get vaccinated at the start of flu season should be your top priority. It can take up to two weeks for the vaccine to reach peak effectiveness once injected, so instruct your team to schedule their shots by mid to late October for the best results.

To ensure everyone gets covered, consider offering flu vaccinations at your worksite during the day or implement a temporary leave policy to allow employees to attend vaccination appointments during working hours.

<sup>1</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Administration. "Employer Guidance Reducing All Workers' Exposures to Seasonal Flu Virus." OSHA.gov. <https://www.osha.gov/dts/guidance/flu/nonhealthcare.html>

## encourage proper hygiene and etiquette

To prevent the spread of germs, share proper hand-washing technique and cough etiquette with your staff. OSHA suggests posting signage to remind workers of these simple, yet powerful flu-fighting steps: Wash hands after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. If coughing, cover your mouth with a tissue—not your hands.<sup>1</sup> When washing, use soap and scrub for at least 20 seconds, then rinse and dry completely. As an alternative, alcohol-based hand sanitizers can also be used to eliminate flu-causing viruses when no soap is present. Apply liquid to the palm of your hand and spread it around to cover the entire surface, then rub until dry. Keep all areas of your worksite well stocked with sanitation supplies and ensure all restrooms have ample soap and water, "no touch" wastebaskets and disposable towels.

## keep the workplace clean

Light switches, door knobs and commonly used equipment are all fertile breeding ground for germs, and keeping them clean will go a long way in helping everyone on your team stay flu-free. In addition to continuing your regularly scheduled cleaning regimen, make sure to stock all areas of your worksite with disposable towels and wipes, and instruct your staff to disinfect their equipment and workspaces at the end of the day. While regular cleaning is important, the CDC warns not to go overboard, stating that no additional disinfection is required beyond simple routine steps.<sup>2</sup>

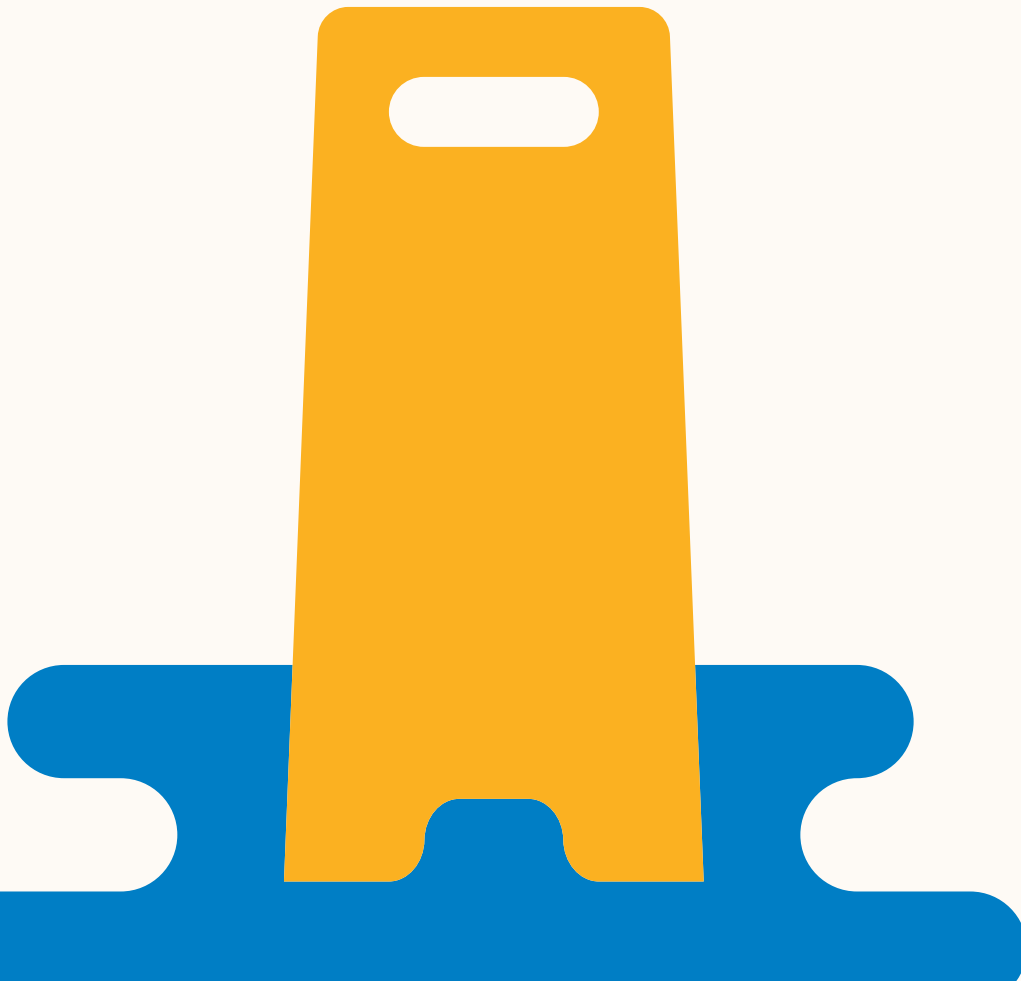
<sup>2</sup> Occupational Safety and Health Administration. "Employer Guidance Reducing All Workers' Exposures to Seasonal Flu Virus." OSHA.gov. <https://www.osha.gov/dts/guidance/flu/nonhealthcare.html>

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Influenza: Preventive Steps." CDC.gov. <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/prevention.htm>

## stay home

With pressure to get the job done always present, sick employees can often feel compelled to come in and "tough it out." However admirable this mentality may be, it poses a great threat to the overall health of your workforce. Allowing sick employees to come into work could quickly lead to the rapid spread of flu symptoms across your team, and drastically reduce the productivity (and profitability) of your operations. Assure employees ahead of time that, as an employer, you encourage them to stay home when feeling sick in order to get well faster and that doing so will lead to no penalties. For temporary talent, who may be even more reluctant to miss work than full-time staff due to the financial ramifications of a missed shift, remind them that there will be no shortage of extra shifts to pick up as the busy season comes into full swing. When workers do stay home, the CDC recommends that they wait until at least 24 hours after their fevers subside before returning to work.<sup>3</sup>

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# stay-safe cheat sheet

## get vaccinated

- Encourage team members to get flu shots by the end of October.
- Initiate an onsite vaccination program.
- Institute a temporary, flexible time-off policy so staff can leave for vaccinations.

## wash hands and cover mouths

- Share OSHA hand-washing technique and cough etiquette with your staff.
- Wash hands with soap and scrub for 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer as a backup.
- Cover mouths with tissues to prevent hand contamination.

## keep the workplace clean

- Keep frequently touched objects and surfaces clean (door knobs, handles, light switches, etc.).
- Stock restrooms and workstations with disposable towels and wipes.
- Instruct staff to clean equipment and work surfaces immediately after use.

## stay home

- Encourage staff to stay home when sick to avoid the spread of influenza.
- Reassure your team that they will incur no penalties for staying home due to illness.
- Make sure sick employees stay home until 24 hours after fever subsides.