The Flu ? A Bonus from Work Nobody Wants

Safety Talk

What’s at Stake?

The flu is a serious contagious disease. Not only does having the flu make you feel miserable, for some people the flu can be fatal. In fact, tens of thousands of people die from the flu in North America, each year.

What’s the Danger?

Your workplace provides many opportunities for people to interact and often in close quarters. More interaction, in close contact, increases the risk for respiratory illnesses like the flu to spread.

The flu virus is mainly spread through droplets from coughs and sneezes. This is why it’s so easy to spread the virus in the close quarters of an office, shop floor, clinic, classroom or other workplace.

Common flu symptoms are easy to remember if you remember the F.A.C.T.S:

- Fever
- Aches
- Chills
- Tiredness
- Sudden onset

Symptoms can also include headache, sore throat and a hacking cough. Young children are more likely to experience vomiting and diarrhea with the flu.

How to Protect Yourself

Here are SIX tips to lower the risk of getting and spreading the flu virus.

1. The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year.

- While there are many different strains of flu viruses, the flu vaccine protects against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season.
- And don’t worry; the flu vaccine cannot make you sick with the flu. The viruses in the vaccine are either killed or weakened and cannot cause infection.

2. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or cough or sneeze into your elbow if a tissue isn’t available.

- Droplets from coughs or sneezes containing flu virus can travel up to 6 feet (2 metres).
- The simple act of covering your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze can prevent others from getting sick.

3. Clean your hands after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.

- When using soap and water, rub soapy hands together for at least 20 seconds, rinse hands with warm water, and dry completely.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub and wash your hands as soon as you can.

4. Avoid close contact with people who are sick and when you are sick, keep your distance from others.

- It is recommended you stay home and clear of people while you are sick.
- Wait at least 24 hours after your fever before going back to work. This will help to ensure you are no longer contagious.

5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth and try not to use a co-worker’s phone, desk, computer, or other tools and equipment.

- Germs are often spread when a person touches a contaminated surface and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

6. Lastly, take care of yourself.

- Eat a healthy diet. Get plenty of rest, exercise, and try to avoid stress.
- Being stressed can weaken your immune system and make it harder to fight off the flu and other illnesses.

Final Word

Do your part to control the spread of the flu virus.

- Get a flu vaccine as soon as it becomes available.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces; and
- Stay home when you’re sick.