

Businesses: Plan for the 2009-2010 Flu Season

Know
What to Do
About the Flu

Flu season is unpredictable.

No one knows the severity of illness the 2009 H1N1 flu will cause or the amount of illness that may occur as a result of seasonal flu. It is important to make plans for different situations.

Encourage Healthy Habits.

- Keep supplies for handwashing stocked at all times – specifically, soap, running water and paper towels. Consider the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers where handwashing is not possible.
- Keep tissues and “no touch” wastebaskets convenient for use.
- Keep cleaning supplies handy – for example, disinfecting wipes to wipe off frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, desks, keyboards and phones.

Encourage vaccination.

Vaccination is the first step in protecting against seasonal viruses.

- Work with your insurance carrier or a local health agency. It may be possible to offer vaccinations on-site.
- Consider allowing employees time off to get their flu shot(s).

Prepare for increased absenteeism.

- Monitor your absenteeism and prepare to respond.
- Identify your essential services and be sure you can continue to provide these services.
- Cross train personnel to perform essential functions so that your essential functions can continue even if key staff are absent.

Advise employees to stay home if they are sick.

Flu can be spread easily from person to person. Take steps to prevent the spread of flu.

- Encourage sick employees to stay home. Review your policies and practices to consider ways to allow flexibility for employees to stay home when they are sick.
- Allow people to stay home to care for children and other family members.
- Share info with employees so they understand sick leave policies.
- Don't require doctor's slips for sick leave. Doctor's offices and hospitals may be overwhelmed and it might not be practical for employees to see their healthcare provider.

Plan for a variety of situations.

- If the severity of illness increases, you may be asked to do more to increase the physical distance between people – called social distancing. For example, spacing desks/people farther apart, working from home, or cancelling large community gatherings.