

GETTING THROUGH THE FLU - Advice for Businesses

An influenza H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic will affect businesses, their staff and customers - preparation should be in the forefront of employers' minds.

For most people the illness will be mild to moderate, although unpleasant. If you have mild symptoms, be prepared to look after yourself at home.

Signs and symptoms of influenza include fever, cough, sore throat, stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also experience diarrhoea and vomiting. Ring Healthline (0800 611 116) for more information.

How employers can protect employees

- Encourage sick workers to stay home and away from the workplace, and provide flexible leave policies.
- Encourage staff to make sure they're prepared to be self-sufficient for an extended period of time - they should have enough basic supplies at home to last for at least a week.
- Encourage infection control practices in the workplace by displaying posters about proper handwashing, and good coughing and sneezing etiquette.
- Provide information on swine flu for staff.
- Provide sufficient facilities for hand washing and alcohol-based (at least 60%) hand sanitizers or wipes in common workplace areas such as reception, corridors, and restrooms.
- Provide tissues, disinfectants, and disposable towels for employees to clean their work surfaces, as well as appropriate disposal containers.
- The influenza virus can survive on surfaces and infect a person for up to 2-8 hours. To reduce the chance of spread, disinfect commonly touched surfaces such as work stations, counter tops, door knobs, and bathroom surfaces by wiping them with a household disinfectant.

How employees can protect themselves and others

- Try to avoid contact with sick people and avoid crowded settings.
- If you have flu-like symptoms, stay away from work or school until essentially well, that is not sneezing and coughing as this is how the virus spreads. This is usually around three to four days after symptoms start, but may be up to a week.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the rubbish after you use it.
- **Hand hygiene is the single most effective measure in protecting yourself.** Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners can be used if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth as germs spread this way.
- Get vaccinated against seasonal influenza. Influenza immunisation is free for at risk groups until the end of September.

Useful posters to display at your business are available to print from www.tdhub.org.nz

For further information visit www.tdhb.org.nz, www.civildefence.govt.nz, www.moh.govt.nz,
www.getthru.govt.nz, www.dol.govt.nz