Flu Prevention

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Flu season is here, and each one of us plays an important role in protecting ourselves, our family, and our coworkers from getting the flu. As we all know, workplaces offer many opportunities for people to interact, and the more interactions between people in close contact, the greater the risk for respiratory illnesses like the flu to spread. Preventing illness among employees is essential in supporting healthy and steady workplace operations. While getting a flu vaccine every year is the best way to avoid getting seasonal flu, it is important to remember that there are other actions you can take to protect yourself and others from getting sick. Here are a few recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

1. Stay home when you are sick so that you avoid spreading germs to others.

If you have flu-like symptoms, stay home to lower the chances of spreading your illness to others. Typical flu-like symptoms include fever or feeling feverish, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headache, muscle or body aches, and fatigue. Your body needs rest to recover from illness, and it can take longer to feel better when you do not rest. You can spread the flu virus up to 24 hours after symptoms subside, so stay home at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines, such as Tylenol or Motrin. This will help ensure that your fever is truly gone and you are past the point of being contagious. If your immune system (this helps you fight infections) is weakened from other

medical conditions, you may need to stay home longer.

2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

The flu spreads easily from person to person. It spreads mainly through droplets that come from a sick person's nose and mouth when they cough, sneeze, or talk. Stay at least 6 feet away from sick people when possible as droplets can travel this far and land in the noses and mouths of people nearby or be inhaled into their lungs. In addition, tell your employer if you are sick. If possible, those people who are sick with the flu should avoid attending meetings and unnecessarily exposing others.

3. Cover your coughs and sneezes.

Covering your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, sleeve, or mask helps prevent the spread of the flu virus through the air and on your hands. After using a tissue, throw it away and then immediately wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow, not your hands. If you are sick and have a job that requires you to be at work, you may additionally choose to wear a surgical mask when you are sick to help lower the chances of spreading flu to others.

4. Wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap and water.

If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Washing your hands lowers the amount of flu virus that can spread when you shake someone's hands or touch surfaces and objects such as desks and doorknobs. It is especially important to wash your hands before and after touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.

5. Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.

The flu virus can remain on surfaces for up to 8 hours. Cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects lowers the amount of flu virus that can be spread when you touch an infected surface and then your eyes, nose, or mouth. Soap and water is all you need to remove the flu virus. You can also use a bleach-and-water solution or disinfectant with a label that says "EPA approved" for killing bacteria and viruses. Always follow directions on product labels.

6. Be prepared and informed.

Get a seasonal flu vaccination as soon as it is available in your area, keep informed about your local flu situation, and know your employer's sick leave policies.

The actions you take and the plans you make today make a difference. By doing your part to help prevent the spread of the flu, you will add years to your life and life to your years!