

Workplace Wellness Tips: Cold and Flu Season

Workplace Strategy

The *written, verbal and implied norms* e.g. culture, around a flu prevention strategy must be communicated clearly, put into practice consistently and employee friendly. Here are some questions to think about when creating your strategy:

- Will we pay our employees to stay home if they have the flu?
- For how long? The CDC guidelines ask people to stay home for at least 24-hours after their fever has resolved.
- Do we need to see a doctor's note? Keep in mind, most medical practices are not seeing patients with the flu unless their symptoms become severe or have underlying medical conditions.
- Can our employees afford to stay home without pay if they have the flu?
- Will we send sick employees home?
- Will supervisors and managers lead by example and stay home if sick?
- What about employees that have sick family members at home and have been exposed to the flu virus? Will we ask them to stay home until their family members' fever has subsided for 24-hours?
- What will we ask of our customers and vendors? If your business receives walk-in foot traffic, will you ask anyone with flu-like symptoms not to enter your workplace?

Education

Education is a key first step toward workplace wellness. To help educate employees about signs, symptoms and ways to prevent the spread of the flu or cold, please display each of the posters in a high visibility, employee-focused area in your workplace and distribute the "Flu Shot/Mist" flyer to each employee.

You may make copies or print copies from the online file. The flyer and posters can be found online at chamberchoices.com. You may want to include them as payroll stuffer, e-mail them directly to employees or place them in their in-boxes.

If you need more posters, please call me at 406-442-2405 x107 or e-mail at chelsea@montanachamber.com

Build awareness

Cold and flu season in Montana is cyclical. Expect it to surge again around the holidays and around the end of February beginning of March. Create simple e-mail messages to send to employees as reminders by taking the short, concise messages in each of the posters and the flyer and repeating them via e-mail.

Encourage vaccination

Encourage your employees to get vaccinated and use Montana Chamber Choices health insurance benefits. The “Flu Shot/Mist” flyer describes how to submit reimbursement for the H1N1 shot/mist and it also details that your Montana Chamber Choices policy may cover the cost of the seasonal flu shot/mist. Check with your agent to determine if your plan will cover the seasonal flu shot/mist. Lastly, the \$300 wellness benefit that exists in each Montana Chamber Choices plan can be used to cover the cost of the flu/shot mist. Use it well!

Stay home if you're sick

Several health care clinics are rejecting people with flu symptoms from seeking care while they are contagious.

There is very little a health care provider can do for the flu other than prescribe an antiviral medication.

Employees should call ahead and verify their symptoms and severity before making a trip to visit their health care provider.

Be consistent

Be consistent in your communications to employees and in your implementation of any special flu prevention strategies you enact.

Let us know

Please let me know if you found these tips helpful by completing a 3-minute survey online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MTchamberchoicesflukit>

I am also available as a wellness resource. I can be reached at 406-442-2405 x107 or chelsea@montanachamber.com for additional posters or postcards or to answer questions you may have about the enclosed materials or suggested strategies.

Stay well!
Chelsea