

Reducing the risk of exposure to the flu in the workplace will be challenging, but there are basic policies, personal protective actions and social distancing precautions that can be implemented in every workplace. Effective communication with all employees, suppliers and customers is crucial.

Protecting employees

- Encourage your employees to:
 - Wash their hands frequently and always wash their hands or use a hand sanitizer after they cough, sneeze or blow their noses.
 - Cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough and sneeze into their upper sleeves if tissues are not available
 - Avoid touching their nose, mouth and eyes.
 - Get appropriate vaccination for seasonal flu when it becomes available.
- Provide customers and the public with hand sanitizers, tissues and trash receptacles.
- Discourage employees from using others' phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment.
- Frequently disinfect work surfaces, telephones, computers and other office equipment with sanitizer wipes.



- Promote healthy lifestyles, including good nutrition, exercise and smoking cessation. Overall health affects a person's ability to fight off or recover from infectious diseases.

Social distancing

The best strategy to reduce the risk of becoming infected with influenza during a serious outbreak is to avoid crowded settings and other situations that increase the risk of exposure to illness:

- Sick employees should stay home.
- Caution employees to avoid close contact with their coworkers and customers.
- Consider installing physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards, to protect employees who interact with customers.
- Consider reconfiguring shared or clustered cubicles so barriers separate workspaces.
- Advise employees to avoid shaking hands and always wash their hands after contact with others.
- Use teleconferencing, e-mail, conference calls and text messages to communicate.
- When in-person meetings are necessary, avoid close contact by keeping a separation of at least six feet and minimize the time spent meeting.

Communicate frequently!

- Designate a person to monitor public health communications about pandemic flu recommendations and provide that information to employees in appropriate languages and formats.
- Distribute information to employees through a variety of communication channels, including company
 - Newsletters
 - Fact sheets
 - Memos
 - Internal and external Web sites
 - Bulletin boards/electronic reader boards
 - E-mail and text messages
 - Public address system.
- Use signs to keep employees and customers informed about flu prevention and symptoms.



Business practices

- Work with your employees to identify new ways to do business that can help to keep them and customers safe and healthy.
- Provide employees with options for working from home, if possible.

- Consider providing or expanding Internet or phone-based services, drive-up windows or home-delivery customer service strategies to minimize face-to-face contact.



- Consider flex scheduling to reduce the number of employees in the office at the same time.
- Work with your employees regarding transportation issues and child care concerns.

Policy considerations

- Establish policies for sick-leave and family medical leave absences unique to a pandemic.
- Establish policies on sending home employees with influenza symptoms and when people can return to work.
- Work sites with on-site child care should plan for whether facilities will remain open or will close and the impact of such decisions on employees and the business.
- Consider limiting access by customers, visitors (including family) and the general public.

**For more information
about influenza, visit:
www.flu.oregon.gov**

or call

**Oregon Public Health Hotline
1-800-978-3040**



**Oregon Public Health Division
Emergency Preparedness Program**
800 N.E. Oregon Street, Suite 465B
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Reducing workplace exposure to the flu

Common-sense steps you can take to reduce exposure to pandemic influenza in the workplace

