



SAFETY TOOLBOX TRAINING – AVOIDING THE FLU

SUPERVISOR INSTRUCTIONS:

- *Use toolbox trainings to spark safety discussions during monthly meetings with employees*
- *Submit the employee sign-in sheet to your designated administrative assistant /training coordinator as a record of training*

In 1918 an influenza virus, commonly known as “the flu”, killed 40 million people worldwide. Today, it remains a leading cause of lost time among all workers. The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illnesses, and sometimes can lead to death.

SYMPTOMS OF FLU

Some common symptoms of seasonal flu include:

- fever (often high)
- headache
- extreme tiredness
- dry cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle aches
- Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, also can occur but are more common in children than adults. Some people who have been infected with the new H1N1 flu virus have reported diarrhea and vomiting as additional symptoms.

HOW THE FLU SPREADS

Flu viruses are thought to spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing. People may also become infected by touching objects contaminated with the flu virus and then touching their mouth or nose. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others 1 day before flu symptoms develop and 5-7 days after becoming ill.

That means that you may be able to pass the flu on to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.



PREVENTION IS THE BEST MEDICINE:

While the flu is an extremely contagious disease, there are certain steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of contracting it.

- **Vaccination against influenza** every year is the best way to avoid contracting the flu, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Vaccination is especially important for those who are likely to become very ill if infected, such as the very young or the very old.
- **Always wash your hands** thoroughly with anti-bacterial soap after using toilet facilities and frequently throughout the day, especially during the flu season.

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- **Avoid contact** with co-workers that are suffering from symptoms of the flu.
- **Avoid touching** your face or rubbing your eyes as this may help spread the virus to your respiratory system.
- **Get plenty of rest**; sufficient sleep will help your body maintain its immune system.

NOTE: Antibiotics, though used to treat secondary infection sometimes associated with the flu, are for bacterial infections and will have no effect on the influenza virus.

WHO SHOULD NOT BE VACCINATED AGAINST SEASONAL FLU

Some people should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician. They include:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs.
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- People who developed Guillian-Barré Syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously.
- Children less than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for use in this age group).
- People who have a fever that is associated with a moderate or severe illness should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen.



If you have questions about whether you should get a flu vaccine, consult your health-care provider.

COMPLICATIONS OF FLU

Although influenza is a serious illness, most healthy people will feel completely well again within 7 – 10 days. However, complications can make the illness more serious. Complications of the flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes. You should consult a physician if the symptoms of influenza become severe or persist for more than 10 days.

REMEMBER: HINDSIGHT EXPLAINS THE INJURY THAT FORESIGHT WOULD HAVE PREVENTED